# Our Life After Death

SEVENTEENTH EDITION

Cornelius W. T. Wilson

August 1906

# "OUR LIFE AFTER DEATH."

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# "OUR LIFE AFTER DEATH."

OR

THE TEACHING OF THE BIBLE CONCERNING THE UNSEEN-WORLD.

BY THE

REVEREND ARTHUR CHAMBERS,

ASSOCIATE OF KING'S COLLEGE, LONDON.

*Seventeenth Edition.*

WITH PREFACE BY THE REVEREND

CANON HAMMOND, LL.B.

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To my Vicar,

the Reverend Edward G. Gordon, M.A.,

as a mark of esteem,

and

in grateful acknowledgment

of a

very pleasant ministry shared with him,

I desire

to dedicate these pages.

# PREFACE.

—:o:—

THE line of thought which I have endeavoured to work out in this little Treatise, originally formed the basis of four Sermons, which I preached in St. Mark's Church, Battersea Rise, London, during Advent of 1892.

Several gentlemen of the congregation expressed a very strong wish that these Sermons should be printed, and feeling that they might, perhaps, be helpful to some who are earnest students of God's truth, I promised, with some diffidence, to comply with their request.

When, however, I set myself to put the manuscripts into shape for the printer, I became conscious of how much I had been obliged to curtail the subject in order to adapt it to the pulpit.

This seemed regrettable, and further consideration prompted me to abandon the idea of publishing these thoughts as Sermons, and in place thereof to put forth this little work.

An advantage has, I think, been gained. All that the Sermons contain is embodied in this Treatise, while an opportunity has been thus afforded me of making my exposition more exhaustive and connected.

My friends must pardon me in being so slow to redeem my promise. The duties of a busy ministerial life leave little leisure for literary effort.

I would wish the reader not to consider the views herein expressed as being the outcome of a few months' reflection. They are the result of convictions which have been growing and maturing within me for a period of twenty years or more.

There is one circumstance in connection with the publication of this work, to which I cannot refrain from alluding.

Two highly esteemed friends (the one a clergyman of our Church, and the other a devout layman,) greatly encouraged me as I penned these pages.

Absolutely convinced, as I am, of the truth of

what I have set forth, there have been occasions when I have felt inclined to shrink from a task which may expose me to the criticisms of some whose disposition is to pre-judge and condemn anything with which they are not altogether familiar. At such times of hesitancy, these two friends said: "Go on; you are writing for those who want to know the truth."

My task was still unfinished when I spoke, beside their open graves, the words of Resurrection and Life.

They are in that Unseen-World, about which, for years, we had so often, and so earnestly conversed.

ARTHUR CHAMBERS.

February, 1894.

# PREFACE TO THE SECOND EDITION

BY THE REVEREND

## CANON HAMMOND, LL.B.

THE subject of which Mr. CHAMBERS treats in the following pages is not only one of surpassing interest, second only—if indeed it *is* second—to the question of our life here, but it is one on which the most irrational and unscriptural views prevail, and, alas! have prevailed for some centuries. The doctrine of the Intermediate State has well-nigh disappeared from our present-day theology; so much so, that it is a downright surprise to many Churchmen to learn that we do not depart at death to Heaven or Hell, whilst the belief of most Dissenters is represented by the Westminster Confession, which expressly declares that the souls of the righteous are perfected and pass straight to Heaven at the moment of their departure from the earth.

But a still more serious error is to be found in the views—so dishonouring to the Divine perfections, so inconsistent with the Fatherhood and love of God—entertained as to the retribution awaiting the impenitent. The doctrine of Eternal Torment, which has long held possession of the mind of Christendom, is responsible for no small share of the infidelity and irreligion which unhappily prevail amongst us. People say that they cannot and will not embrace a creed which is so cruel and unjust, and so they throw religion over altogether. There was every need, therefore, that these topics should be discussed, and I am bound to say that I think the Author has discussed them with commendable clearness and moderation. I do not make myself responsible for every statement in this volume—no reasonable person would expect that—but with his main positions I confess that I am in full sympathy, and I believe that, stated as he has stated them, they can do nothing but good.

It may be they will win their way but slowly and painfully to popular acceptance, but believing them to be reasonable and Scriptural, I cannot despair of their ultimate triumph. And I shall be thankful if any words of mine can procure for them a calm and dispassionate consideration.

*The Vicarage, St. Austell, Cornwall,*
*September*, 1894.

# THE SCHEME OF THE TREATISE

The Introduction of the Subject.

The meaning of the word "Hades."

The Greek, Jewish, and Early-Christian conceptions of Hades.

The truth about an Intermediate Life insufficiently realised by many Christians.

The statements of Holy Scripture concerning that Life.

Three main Propositions established by Holy Scripture :—

## PROPOSITION I.

That a person, although dissociated from his earthly body, in passing through the experience which we call "Death," still continues to live *as a Conscious Personality.*

## PROPOSITION II.

That a person, while maintaining his Conscious Personality, in and through "the accident of death," does not *then* continue his existence in either *Heaven* or *Hell*.

## PROPOSITION III.

That a person maintaining his Conscious Personality in and through Death, enters at once into an *Intermediate* or *Hades Life*.

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Other truths concerning the Intermediate-Life which may be deduced from the statements of Holy Scripture.

## DEDUCTION 1.

That there will be no break in the continuity of our existence in passing from the Earth-Life to the Hades-Life.

The bearing of this Deduction upon Christian thought and experience :—

It is calculated to dispel much of the terror with which Death is regarded by even sincere Christians.

## DEDUCTION 2.

That in the Hades-Life, we shall recognise, and be brought into relationship with, those whom we have previously known in the Earth-Life.

The bearing of this Deduction:—

It mitigates the pain which attends separation, by Death, from those we love.

## DEDUCTION 3.

That there are different spheres of experience in the Hades-Life.

The bearing of this Deduction:—

It will impress upon us, as no other consideration will, the vast importance of cultivating, *in this life*, our character and spirit.

## DEDUCTION 4.

That a work of perfecting and developing will go on in the Hades-Life.

The bearing of this Deduction:—

(A.) It imparts a reasonableness to our Faith.

(B.) It invests the Intermediate-life with increased interest.

## DEDUCTION 5.

That there is a preaching of Christ's Gospel in the Intermediate-life, which warrants us in hoping that many who do not leave the Earth-life in a state of salvation, may, *there*, be brought into that condition.

This Deduction does not teach Universalism.

This Deduction does not deny that there will be a Hell for the finally impenitent.

The Preaching of the Gospel in the Intermediate-life rendered a *necessity* by two considerations:—

(A.) God's attitude toward the human race, as portrayed by the writers of Scripture.

(B.) The Office and Position assigned to our Lord by the same.

The Direct Statements of Scripture in establishment of this Deduction.

The bearing of this Deduction:—

(*a.*) It, alone, enables a thoughtful Christian to maintain an attitude of *fearlessness* in the face of an attack upon Christianity.

(*b.*) It, alone, enables us to reconcile many of the acts of God's Providence with the thought of His *goodness*.

(*c.*) It invests the duty of Intercessory-Prayer with increased significance.

(*d.*) It imparts new incentive to work for Christ.

(*e.*) It makes it probable that the mission of the Church of Christ is a far greater one than is commonly supposed.

## THREE OBJECTIONS

Against the last Deduction considered.

# "Our Life after Death."

"*Where* is he? *Where* is she? WHAT is this solemn mystery which those white, sealed lips may not disclose?"

These are questions which we have asked ourselves as we have stood in the darkened death-chamber, and timidly gazed on the rigid, wax-like features of the departed.

And one may be quite sure that these involuntary questionings are not indications of mere idle curiosity, nor of a morbid craving for the sensational and the unknown.

They have their roots in truer and nobler feelings. They spring from the better side of our nature; from that deeply implanted, and ineradicable instinct which makes it impossible for us to forget, and cease to love, many who, by the transplanting hand of

Death, have passed outside the circle of earthly contact and intercourse.

If, within us, there be this yearning affection for a departed one; if, as Christians, we believe that one to be still living, though in a life dissociated from ours; and if, moreover, we realise that we ourselves are destined, sooner or later, to enter upon the same experience, must it not be impossible, if we are thoughtful, to be other than intensely interested in all that concerns that existence? Suppose that we were so circumstanced, as to be contemplating a departure from the land of our birth, to rejoin friends who had preceded us to a country strange and unknown, should we not eagerly gather every available scrap of information regarding that country and the conditions of life there?

In a few years, at most, we shall be leaving the Earth-life, to follow many whom we have known and loved into a strange place—the Hades-Life. Is it less natural, reasonable and desirable that we should be anxious to know everything which may be known in regard to that Life? Surely not.

That, I imagine, will be a sufficient answer to those who, while themselves content with

indefiniteness, consider it right to discourage in others the desire to know more concerning a subject of which God has revealed much.

For the most part, Christian teachers and writers, however forcibly and distinctly they may have endeavoured to depict the future Heaven-life, have barely mentioned the existence of an Intermediate or Hades-life. And yet the one is as much a fact as the other.

Many, too, who have written and spoken about it, have so enshrouded it, as it were, in spiritual mistiness, that to many it has seemed a vague, unhuman, and unreal existence; a veritable "world of shadows."

It will be my effort to show, in these pages, that this conception of the Hades-life is false and misleading: that it is as *real* a phase of human existence as the present Earth-life is, and the future Heaven-life will be.

In dealing with this subject, I am, of course, aware that I may, perhaps, offend the prejudices of some. That is a danger which threatens anyone who steps out of the rut of conventionality. Further, I may be told that because certain doctors of

theology have thought otherwise than myself, it is a proof that I am mistaken in my views. To justify such an assumption, a doctrine of human infallibility, as the exclusive endowment of a select few, is necessary.

Lastly, I may lay myself open to the charge of speculating with regard to Divine truth.

In reply to these possible objections, I have but one answer, which I deem quite sufficient, viz., that prejudice, preconception and theology must bow to the authority of Holy Scripture.

That is the position assumed by the Church of England, as expressed in the VI. Article, and to which I loyally subscribe.

All I ask is that what I have to say may be judged by the standard of the Bible. The teachings and opinions of others on this subject should be authoritative only so far as they agree with the revealed Word of God.

It will be necessary to clear the way for the discussion of this interesting question, by defining clearly what is meant by the word "Hades." Misunderstanding on this point has led to a great

deal of erroneous, and essentially unscriptural teaching.

## The Meaning of the word "Hades."

The Greek language contains two words which are used many times in the New Testament—"Gehenna" and "Hades."

"Gehenna," meaning literally, "the valley of Hinnom"—(2 Chron. xxxiii. 6)—a term applied to a spot outside the walls of Jerusalem, where huge fires were constantly kept burning to consume the offal and refuse of the city—was employed by our Lord to figuratively describe the place or condition of punishment into which the finally impenitent will pass *after* the Judgment.

"Hades" is used to denote the place or condition into which every person enters at the moment of death, in an "unclothed," or disembodied state. From the fact of the latter being a mid-way existence between the Earth-life and the future Heaven-life, it has come to be called by us the "Intermediate-Life"; while St. Paul's well known contrast between "the things which are *seen*," and "the things which

are *not seen*" (2 Cor. iv. 18), has led to its, also, being spoken of as the "Unseen-World."

When the Greek New Testament was translated into English, *one* English word—"Hell"—was, very unfortunately, made to do service for the two Greek words named above. "Hell" was used to express both the place of future punishments, and also the abode of those, who having departed the Earth-life, are existing as disembodied spirits.

As was to be expected, confusion of ideas soon arose in consequence, and ordinary readers became bewildered.

Such passages as Acts ii. 31. "His soul was not left in hell," and the clause in the Apostles' Creed—"He descended into hell"—instead of being understood as expressing that Christ at His crucifixion entered into *Hades*, seem to teach that He went into the place of punishment—Hell; where He never went.

I have known persons refuse to repeat this clause of the Creed, for that very reason.

It were well if our Church removed this antiquated blunder from her Prayer Book.

Let us, then, be quite clear on this matter. When

we meet with the word "Hell" in our English Bible, we must bear in mind that it sometimes stands for "Hell," and sometimes, for "Hades."

Which of the two is intended, can only be determined by referring to the Greek text, or the Revised Edition of our Bible.

Now, I have said that the word "Hades" in the Greek New Testament is used to denote the place, or condition, into which every person passes at the moment of death, in an "unclothed," or disembodied state.

The ground upon which we build our certainty that such is the case, is that that was the thought which the word conveyed to the mind of Jews and Greeks who were contemporaneous with the writers of the Books of the New Testament.

We cannot conceive that the Sacred writers would have used, *without comment, or modification*, a popular word, around which had crystallised a fixed idea, if they had not intended that idea to be perpetuated by it.

To have adopted a generally accepted word, and to have imported a *new* sense into it, would have been unjustifiable, except that a very clear and

explicit statement had been made, at the time, that the new sense was to be understood.

We have an instance which bears upon this point, in the New Testament. In the Fourth Gospel, St. John applies the term "Logos" ("Word") to Christ. At the time he wrote, the term had an established signification, and was current among the philosophers of a certain school. It denoted the most exalted one of a number of created Intelligences, who were supposed to surround the throne of God. This being, besides existing as a *creature*, was imagined as being incapable of contact with matter.

But when St. John called our Lord, "the Logos," he was very careful to explain that he meant the term to convey a very different meaning in its Christian, from what it had hitherto done in its philosophical use.

He shows at once the radical distinction between the two. The "Logos" of St. John, so far from being a *created* being, "was *God*" (John i. 1); and so far from being incapable of contact with matter, "*was made flesh*" (John i. 14).

If the writers of the New Testament, in their use of the word "Hades," had not intended us to under-

stand by it what everybody living in their times understood by it, how came it that they did not exercise care, as St. John did, to guard against any possibility of misinterpretation?

If Jew and Greek were wrong in their belief in an Intermediate-life; if, in other words, the idea conjured up in their mind by the word "Hades" had no basis in fact, our Lord's incorporation of it into His teaching, and the Apostles' and Evangelists' use of it in their writings, without any indication that the meaning of the word had undergone a change in their hands, can only bear one construction. It was calculated to mislead men, and to propagate untruth.

Hence we conclude that when our Lord and the Sacred writers used the word "Hades," they meant by it what those whom they addressed understood by it—an Intermediate-life.

It will be necessary and instructive to glance at the views held on this subject by those who lived at the time the New Testament was written.

### The Greek Conception of Hades.

The word itself is Grecian, and etymologically signifies, "Something unseen." The idea which

the Greeks had was that the Spirits or Manes of the dead went, after their burial, into a locality called "Hades." In that abode, the disembodied souls were placed either in the happy fields of Elysium, or in the gloomy realms of Tartarus. In the former, the souls of the virtuous enjoyed themselves, with a lingering regret for the body which had been left behind. In the latter, the wicked were tormented with different degrees of sorrow.

### The Jewish Conception of Hades.

This did not differ materially from the Grecian conception, except that the Jews, unlike the Greeks, held a belief in a final Resurrection, at which the disembodied spirit would again be re-clothed with a body. This state or place they called in the Hebrew "Sheol," and later, when the Greek had become the common tongue, "Hades." Its position, in accordance with Jewish notions and language, was thought to be underground. Josephus tells us that the soul of Samuel, when he appeared to Saul "came *up* from Hades." In another place, he tells us that the rationalising Sadducees "took away the rewards and punishments of the Soul in Hades":

while the Pharisees held that "the souls of men were punished or rewarded *under the earth*, according to their practice of virtue or wickedness in life." From the Rabbinical writings we are able to gather that the Jews, like the heathens, looked for a state of conscious existence, immediately after death; that in this state were both the just and the unjust; the latter in a state of misery, the former in blissful enjoyment, to which they applied the following terms: —"Paradise"—"the Garden of Eden"—"Beneath the throne of glory" and "Abraham's bosom."

Such then, is a brief but correct statement of the views concerning the Intermediate-life, of both Jews and Greeks who were contemporaneous with our Lord and the sacred writers. It is impossible that He and they could, again and again, have referred to that Life, as I shall show presently they did, if the thought conveyed by the word had been but the creation of a fancy, and had no foundation in fact.

There is nothing in their utterances on this subject to lead us to suppose that this particular teaching was on any different footing to other teachings of theirs, and to say that they were simply adapting their instruction to popular conceptions which were

untrue, is nothing other than asserting that they lent themselves to the dissemination of error.

Hence, we are driven to this conclusion—that the belief in the Hades-life, as entertained by Jews and Greeks, is a belief founded on reality, for the reason that it is sanctioned by Christ and the writers of the New Testament.

### The early-Christian Conception of Hades.

The foregoing conclusion is well-nigh unassailable, in view of the fact that the early Christians believed in an Intermediate State, which they, like the Jews and Greeks, called "Hades."

Justin Martyr (A.D. 147) declares that "those who say that there is no Resurrection, but that, immediately after death, their souls are taken up to Heaven, these are not to be accounted either Christians or Jews."

Tertullian (A.D. 200) states that "the souls of all men go to Hades until the Resurrection; the souls of the just being in that part of Hades called the 'Bosom of Abraham,' or 'Paradise.'"

Origin (A.D. 230) expresses the same views.

Lactantius (A.D. 306) writes, "Let no one think

that souls are judged immediately after death; for they are all detained in the same common place of keeping, until the time come when the Supreme Judge shall enquire into their good or evil deeds."

Hilary (A.D. 350) speaks of its being "the law of human necessity, that bodies should be buried, and souls descend to Hades."

Augustine (A.D. 398) writes—"The time between death and final resurrection holds the souls in hidden receptacles, according as each soul is meet for rest or punishment."

It were easy to multiply, indefinitely, instances as above; but these are sufficient to prove that the belief, held alike by Jews and Greeks, and recognised by our Lord and the sacred writers, gained the acceptance of the early Christian Church.

## The truth about an Intermediate-life insufficiently realised by many Christians.

I have especially emphasized the circumstance that our Lord and His disciples emphatically stamped with their authority a belief in the Hades-life, because so many good people, if they do not actually deny it, at least, hardly ever think about it. By

many it is not realised, or, at all events, but very faintly, that this truth is an essential portion of the Christian religion.

The fault, I think, lies principally at the door of our teachers and preachers. The subject is rarely handled in books, and still less rarely from the pulpit. The gaze of Christians has been so earnestly, and not wrongly, directed upon the goal of Christ's Redemption—the future Heaven-life,—that the existence which intervenes between this life and that has been too little regarded, or has altogether been lost to sight. And yet this ought not to be so, if we are desirous of maintaining "the proportion of the faith"; and the fact that it has been so, has been a fruitful cause of error as to *where* we go, and *what* we become, at the moment of death.

The popular idea, happily less prevalent now than formerly, is that when a good person dies, he goes direct to Heaven; and that when a wicked person dies, he passes at once into Hell. Have we not read in books, more distinguished for their piety than scripturalness, many such passages as this? "The dying Christian commended himself to God, and a moment later, the suffering saint of earth was

standing before God's throne in *Heaven*." But it is not true. You may search the Bible from end to end without finding a passage which will justify such a statement.

No one—saint or sinner—passes into Heaven or Hell, on departing from the Earth-life. Not even did our Lord enter Heaven when He died. He was truly Man, as well as truly God, and consequently, had the experience which is allotted to all men. When the lifeless and disfigured Casket hung upon the cross, the bodiless spirit—the real Jesus—passed, at the instant of death, (as our unclothed spirits will pass) into the Unseen World—the Hades-life, where are the millions of the departed.

In that Life, the departed will remain until the Judgment, at which they will stand re-vested with a Resurrection-body. That Judgment passed, and they, redeemed in body, mind and spirit, will then, and not until then, enter Heaven, whither the Risen Christ has preceded them. As it was with Christ, so will it be with them: man will only tread the Courts of Deity wearing Resurrection-robes.

Consider, for a moment, to what difficulty and

absurdity they commit themselves, who ignore the fact of an Intermediate-life.

It is taught by many, that, at death, a good man departs straightway to Heaven, and a wicked man to Hell. Is it possible to reconcile this idea with the thought of a Judgment?

Take the case of the wicked. If, in departing from the Earth-life, they pass direct into Hell, where is the need of a Judgment? They have been sent to their doom; nay more, may have had, by now, thousands of years of punishment, and may yet suffer, if the Judgment be distant enough, for double that period before the Day arrives. Will any one say that it is compatible with either justice or sense to put such an one *on his trial*, when for ages before, his doom has been fixed and endured? Would not a judgment-trial, under such circumstances, be as solemn a farce, as for the law of this country to send a prisoner into penal servitude, and then, after he had undergone twenty years of it, to try him at the Old Bailey for the offence for which he had been already punished? The thought is simply intolerable; and yet to escape it we are obliged to adopt one of two alternatives. Either

there is, at death, an unconsciousness, or annihilation of the man until the Day of Judgment, or there is an Intermediate-life.

As regards a state of unconsciousness between death and the Judgment, the utterances of Christ, St. Peter, and St. Paul, together with the consensus of belief, Jewish, Grecian, and Christian, for past centuries, are against it. With regard to an Intermediate-life, the Bible proclaims it, Jesus confirms it, and our reason approves it.

That Life is chapter II. of human existence, and the Judgment will be the finishing of that chapter.

## The statements of Holy Scripture regarding the Hades-life.

Let us endeavour, now, to see what light is cast upon this important subject by the Word of God. And in doing this, it will be well for us to settle, beforehand, what kind of testimony may reasonably be expected from this source.

For example, we shall not expect to find in the Bible as much information concerning the Intermediate-life, as about the present Earth-life. And the reason of this is that the Bible has been

written rather to teach men how they should live at the *present* time, than to furnish particulars as to *future* existences. The desire of God is that to all who have the Bible "*now*" should be "the accepted time"; "*to-day*, the day of salvation."

As Christians, it is a greater concern to us to learn how we should live now, than how we shall live hereafter; because our future will be an outcome of our present, and the complexion of the one will be determined by the other. We expect therefore that Holy Scripture will clearly reveal this future existence, and its intimate relationship to our present existence; but we do not expect that the information afforded of the one will be as full as that of the other. A Guide-Book to holiness, addressed to those living in the Earth-life, will necessarily deal more especially with the experiences of the Earth-life. The purpose of the Bible, while, of course, it reveals the future, is not so much to lay bare the details of that future, as to concentrate attention upon the importance of a present, out of which the future will arise.

Again, we shall not look to find, in the Bible, the same amount of information concerning the

Intermediate-life, as about the future Heaven-life. But this need not astonish us. It will not do so, if we consider God's two-fold purpose in giving men the Holy Scriptures. First, to influence them to the leading of a Christian life; next, to depict for them the *ultimate* issue of such a life.

They stimulate us to a patient plodding along the high-road of holiness, by indicating the Goal which lies at the end of that pathway.

They urge us to a more earnest striving after the prizes of godliness, by showing what the greatest Prize of all will be.

If we wish to incite a son to be earnest in his efforts to attain a coveted position, we are less concerned to fix his gaze upon the intervening experiences through which he must pass on the way to that position, than upon the attractiveness of the position itself.

It is so with the Bible. It dwells more upon the Consummation of a life of holiness and faith, than upon the intervening experience through which men will pass to that Consummation.

That Consummation will be the Heaven-life—the Goal of Christ's Salvation—where, in "spirit, soul

and body," man will be "perfect and entire, wanting nothing."

That "intervening experience" will be the Hades-life.

Need we wonder, then, such being the case, that Holy Scripture should have more to say of the Heaven-life, than of the Hades-life? The one is but man's Finishing-school, and temporary residence; the other, his Eternal Home.

Our purpose, then, is to ascertain what the Bible has to say with respect to this Intermediate Existence. And we shall see that its teaching establishes the three following main propositions.

## PROPOSITION I.

**That a person, although dissociated from his earthly body, in passing through the experience which we call "death," still continues to live as a Conscious Personality.**

Scripture adduces three historical instances of this truth.

The persons referred to had departed the Earth-life, but are, nevertheless, introduced into a sober,

matter-of-fact narration of earthly events, as *living*, *thinking* and *speaking* individuals.

No question as to their having departed the Earth-life is possible. The body of one had been in the grave four years; that of another had crumbled into dust centuries before; while the Body of the Third lay lifeless and lacerated in a sealed-up sepulchre.

The first is the prophet Samuel. Four years after death, he the *living man*, at the bidding of the woman of Endor, confronts the guilty, panic-stricken Saul, and speaks to him.

The second is Moses. Apart from the thronging multitude, but in sight of wondering disciples, he, bodiless for ages, steps from out the Unseen World to hold converse with Christ on the Mount of Transfiguration, so real, and man-like, that St. Peter wanted to make a tabernacle for him.

The third is the Master Himself, and the writer to whom we are indebted for the account is St. Peter, who saw Moses on the Mount of Transfiguration. He tells us in his Epistle (1 Peter iii. 18-20) that when the Body of Jesus was stiffening in death on the cross, the departed Tenant was preaching

unto "spirits," who had departed this life in a state of disobedience.

All three of these persons had died; all had left behind the earthly body, and yet they stand forth on the page of Divine Inspiration as *living*, *thinking* and *speaking*.

Take, now, our Lord's utterances in support of this proposition.

In His parable of Lazarus and Dives (Luke xvi. 19-31), both men are represented as having died. "The beggar died . . . the rich man also died." And yet, after death, both are depicted as living, thinking and speaking.

On another occasion, when disputing with the Sadducees who denied an After-life, as well as a Resurrection, He sought to convince them that Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, though they had departed the Earth-life ages before, were still living, because God had said, "I *am* (not I *was*) the God of Abraham," &c. This argument He followed up by saying, "For He is not a God of the dead; but of the *living;* for all *live* unto Him" (Luke xx. 38).

Again, in His words, "Fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul" (Matt. x.

28), the inference is unmistakable. By "the soul" is meant that something—the Ego, or Consciousness—which is capable of surviving the catastrophe which destroys the body. There are those who contend that the word "soul" in Scripture, means nothing else than "the principle of *bodily life*." If this be so, then our Lord's words confront them with this difficulty, that those which kill the body are *not* able to kill the bodily life. Assuredly a self-evident absurdity.

There are many other passages (notably Phil. i. 23 and 24; 2 Cor. v. 1-4 and 6-8) which could be adduced to establish the fact that our consciousness—our self—is maintained in and beyond death; but as I shall have occasion to refer to them in dealing with another phase of this subject, the foregoing will suffice for our first proposition.

## PROPOSITION II.

**That a person, while maintaining his Conscious Personality in and through the "accident of death," does not THEN continue his existence in either HEAVEN or HELL.**

In other words, neither of those two spheres of existence is entered on leaving the earth-life. It has already been indicated that much misunderstanding exists upon this point. Our hymns and religious writings are conspicuous in this respect for their unscripturalness.

In the Bible, Heaven and Hell are always depicted as *future* existences; as experiences of enjoyment or unhappiness which are *to follow* the Judgment. It never represents that either the one or the other condition will be entered at the moment of bodily dissolution.

The teaching of our Lord most emphatically confirms this. Over and over again He stated that the determining event of man's final destiny will be the Judgment. *Then* he will pass to his reward or punishment. *Then* he will enter Heaven or Hell. "The Son of Man shall come in the glory of His Father, with His angels; and *then* He shall reward every man according to his works" (Matt. xvi. 27).

A number of like passages (*e.g.*, Matt. xiii. 40-43; xxv. 31-46; John v. 28 and 29) show how unwarranted is the idea that at the moment of death a

good man enters Heaven, or a bad man, Hell. But even more convincing than these passages are some other words of Christ, the force of which it is impossible to explain away. He said, "No one hath ascended up to Heaven, but He that came down from Heaven, even the Son of Man which is in Heaven" (John iii. 13). If, then, no one had then ascended up to Heaven except the Lord Jesus, who had come from there, none of the good men who had departed the earth-life before He came could have gone to their place of final and eternal bliss, which is always called Heaven. And yet, as Christ showed, they were living. Where? Again, our Lord told the thief on the cross that "he should be with Him that day in Paradise" (Luke xxiii. 43). Now, it is quite certain that Christ did not go from the cross to Heaven, but passed, as we shall see later, in a disembodied state, into the Hades-life. Even after His Resurrection He said to Mary, "I am *not yet* ascended to My Father" (John xx. 17). Therefore, the "Paradise" to which the thief went with Him, on the day of crucifixion, was not Heaven.

There is another important passage which we cannot pass over without notice in this connection. In

Rev. vi. 9, 10, "the souls of them that were slain for the word of God," are represented as crying from "under the altar," for justice against those who had wronged them in the Earth-life. That the expression "under the altar" does not denote "Heaven" is quite plain; first, for the reason that its established usage bore an altogether different signification, as we shall see; and next, that the condition of those mentioned as being there, is incompatible with the restfulness, satisfaction and perfection which will characterise the Heaven-life.

In like manner, Holy Scripture is equally emphatic in pronouncing that no one, at the moment of death, passes into Hell.

Neither our Lord, nor His apostles, alarm the wicked with the fear that at dying their souls will enter at once into a state of final punishment.

It is to the Judgment of the great day, and to what will follow it, that the gaze of the ungodly is directed.

To what, then, are we to attribute the fact that so many excellent Christians have held and taught a doctrine the opposite of this? To the unfortunate circumstance to which we have already alluded;

viz., that the one English word "Hell" has been used to translate two Greek words of completely different meanings. Passages in the English New Testament using the word "Hell" are flatly contradicted by the corresponding passages of the Greek New Testament. The inaccuracy of the translators has begotten a theological falsehood.

## PROPOSITION III.

**That a person, maintaining his conscious personality in and through death, enters at once into an Intermediate, or Hades-life.**

In considering this phase of our subject, we will take, first, our Lord's own words in connection therewith. If He came as the Divine Revealer of man's future, it is incredible, if an Intermediate life be a fact, that He should not disclose that fact. Moreover, if such a Life had no existence save in the minds of poets and mistaken theologians, surely He, as the expounder of truth, was under the obligation to explode the fallacy.

Did He, then, in clear and unequivocal language, bear testimony to the truth of the Hades-life?

He did. Take His parable of Lazarus and Dives, and His words spoken to a man on the eve of passing into that life.

In the parable, the beggar and the rich man are not only portrayed as living personalities, after having passed through the experience of death, but the sphere in which their existence is continued is named. "It came to pass that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels into *Abraham's bosom*. The rich man also died and was buried; and in hell he lift up his eyes" (Luke xvi. 22, 23).

Now, the expression, "Abraham's bosom," as has been already stated, was a term common among the Jews to describe that part of Hades into which the righteous pass at death. It is frequently employed by the Rabbinical writers, and is never confounded with the Heaven-life which will follow the Resurrection.

Our Lord, in using this expression, most certainly intended that meaning to be taken, because the Jews whom He addressed attached no other meaning to it.

Clearly, then, Lazarus was in *Hades*.

Our English New Testament represents the rich man as being in *Hell*. But the translation is a false one. In the original Greek it is, "In *Hades* he lift up his eyes."

So, then, the rich man, though in another sphere than that of Lazarus, was also in Hades. I am aware that some teachers have viewed this parable as depicting the future condition of man, in happiness or misery, in *Heaven* or *Hell*. But besides the locality in which the two persons are placed being actually named, the context is against such a supposition. At the time that Lazarus and Dives are shown in their after-death experiences, this world is still in existence, and the brothers of the rich man are then living on the earth, and the Judgment is still distant. But Heaven and Hell will *follow*, not *precede*, the close of the present Dispensation and the Judgment. We conclude, therefore, that this parable distinctly affirms the truth of an Intermediate-life.

We come, now, to Christ's words spoken to the dying robber. "To-day shalt thou be with Me in Paradise" (Luke xxiii. 43). Conjure up the scene as conveyed by the brief narrative. A wretched, pain-

racked man, with the awful shadow of death falling upon him, turns his haggard eyes upon his fellow-sufferer, and with his spiritual perception quickened by the near approach of eternity, asks Him to "remember him" at that future time when He shall come into His Kingdom. The answer which comes from the pitiful Saviour of mankind scatters the terrors of death, and soothes the agony of dying. He has pleaded for a blessing in the *future;* Christ will give him one *at once.* "Verily, I say unto thee," said Jesus, "*to-day* shalt thou be with Me in Paradise." What signification did the word "Paradise" bear to the dying man? No other, surely, than it conveyed to all Jews. It described with several other terms, as we have seen, the lot of the righteous in Hades. The robber himself was, undoubtedly, a Jew, as his death by crucifixion rather than by decapitation indicates. In using that word, Jesus perfectly well knew the meaning the man would attach to it.

Why did He transfer that sufferer's gaze from the *future*, and fix it upon the *present*, unless the present were a reality?

Both Jesus and the robber were on the point of stepping out of the earth-life, and it is difficult to

conceive of a more solemn attestation to the existence of an Intermediate life than is afforded by these words.

From the testimony of Christ as to the Hades-life, we pass now to the testimony of the Apostles. And it is very significant that the Apostles, into whose writings the subject is introduced, were men who were personally brought into contact with the Hades-life.

St. Peter and St. John saw and heard Moses when he stepped from out that life to converse with Christ on the Mount of Transfiguration; while St. Paul had the absolutely unique experience of entering into the Hades-life before the axe of Nero had terminated his earthly existence.

## St. Peter's Testimony.

The passage is 1 Peter iii. 18-20, and is exceedingly valuable as showing *where* our Lord was during the period between crucifixion and resurrection.

It confirms entirely the sense which we have insisted must be placed upon the word "Paradise," and which is embodied in the clause of the Creed, "He descended into Hades." "Christ . . . being put

to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit; by which (Greek "*in*" which) also He went and preached unto the spirits in prison (Greek "*keeping*") which sometimes were disobedient."

If any reliability whatever is to be placed upon language, these words can only mean that the disembodied Christ went into a sphere where other disembodied spirits were, and preached to them. That this is the sense intended is plain from what St. Peter says in the next chapter. "For for this cause was the Gospel preached also to them that are dead, that they might be judged according to (*i.e.*, by the same standard as) men in the flesh, but live according to God in the spirit" (1 Peter iv. 6).

These two passages establish incontrovertibly three points. Firstly—That our Lord, after death, and before His Ascension, preached to "spirits." Secondly—That these "spirits" had left the Earth-life, as indicated by the words "them that are dead," which refer to their *bodily* condition, for there would be no sense in preaching to lifeless beings. Thirdly—That these "spirits" were certainly not in Heaven or Hell, because the preaching was in view of a

coming Judgment, and Heaven and Hell will *follow* that.

This preaching to sinners in Hades was predicted by our Lord, when He said, "The hour is coming, and *now is*, when the dead (*i.e.*, the departed) shall hear the voice of the Son of God" (John v. 25).

Hence we are driven to the conclusion that St. Peter teaches the existence of an Intermediate-life, and that into that life Jesus and the robber passed at the moment of death. The One to preach; the other to listen.

## St. John's Testimony.

This Apostle is quite as emphatic as St. Peter in his witness to the truth of a Hades-life. There are several references to it in the last book of the New Testament, and the character of the writing, as being a revelation accorded to him, lends additional weight to his utterances. It will be necessary to glance at one or two passages.

In Rev. i. 18, are these words, "I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of Hell, and of death." The word "Hell," in the Greek, is "Hades."

Again, in Rev. xx. 12 and 13. "I saw the dead small and great stand before God; and the books were opened; and another book was opened, which

is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and Hell (Greek: "*Hades*") delivered up the dead which were in them." Surely these words contain the doctrine of an Intermediate-life, and teach that the realm of Death which holds the bodies of the departed ("the dead"), and the World of Hades which holds their spirits, will alike surrender their trust at the Day of Judgment.

Then, the Hades-life will be superseded either by the Heaven-life, or by that awful punishment which will be closed by "the second-Death," in which Christ has said "body and soul shall be destroyed" (Matt. x. 28), and like the Earth-life, will take its place among "the former things which shall have passed away."

We have already referred to those other pregnant words of St. John—"I saw under the altar the souls of them that were slain for the word of God" (Rev. vi. 9).

They need only be recalled in order to point out that the expression, "under the altar," was another

of several Jewish phrases denoting the place or condition of the righteous in Hades.

St. John was a Jew, and used a Jewish expression without so much as a hint of any other than the generally accepted meaning being intended. The inference is plain.

## St. Paul's Testimony.

This, as that of the two last-named Apostles, is very clear and convincing.

Before instancing the passages in which St. Paul refers to the Hades-life, let us endeavour to form some idea of the Apostle's attitude towards that truth.

One fact lies patent to every thoughtful reader of his Epistles. It is this: That his gaze was intently and pre-eminently fixed upon the *Consummation* of Christ's Salvation, viz., the Resurrection, and the Heaven-life which will start from it. Compared with that, every other experience through which he was passing, or would pass, paled into comparative insignificance. Grand and attractive as was the Intermediate-life to him, when wearied with hardship and burdened with care, still it would not be the Perfected-life. Grateful as it would have been

to him to be "unclothed" from the "tabernacle" of a body enfeebled by ill-health, he, with his eye set upon the crowning act of redemption—"to wit the redemption of our body" (Rom. viii. 23), was nevertheless constrained to write, "not that we would be unclothed, but clothed upon." (2 Cor. v. 4.)

Certain, as he was, of there being the nearer Presence of Christ in the Intermediate-life, so that he could say, "We are confident and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord" (2 Cor. v. 8), yet, even that thought did not weaken the absorbing desire "to be *clothed upon* with our house which is from Heaven" (2 Cor. v. 2).

Our concern, then, is to show that, while the splendour and glory of the future Heaven-life eclipsed the attractiveness of the Intermediate-life, and caused St. Paul to say less of the latter than of the former, yet he distinctly affirmed the existence of this Intermediate-life. This will be seen from the following passages:—

"For we that are in this tabernacle do groan, being burdened; not that we would be unclothed,

but clothed upon, that mortality might be swallowed up of life" (2 Cor. v. 4).

"Knowing that whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord" (*v.* 6).

"Willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord" (v. 8).

"I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ: which is far better; nevertheless, to abide in the flesh is more needful for you" (Phil. i. 23-24).

Let us grasp the import of these passages.

*First.*—That the "we" expresses persons altogether distinct from the "tabernacle" in which they may happen to dwell. This is unquestionable, because in 2 Cor. v. 1 the Apostle calls this "tabernacle" "our earthly *house*," and no one will say that a house and its tenant are identical.

*Secondly.*—That the "we" are capable of *three* phases of experience:—

(*a*) "We that are *in this tabernacle*," *i.e.*, enclosed in a body; answering to the Earth-life.

(*b*) We that might be "*unclothed*," *i.e.*, disembodied; denoting the Hades-life.

(*c*) We that would be "*clothed upon*," *i.e.*, re-vested

with a Resurrection-body; predicating the future Heaven-life.

*Thirdly.*—Being "present with the Lord" is associated with being "absent from the body."

This presence with Christ cannot refer to the Heaven-life, because there we shall not be absent from the body. We shall then be in possession of a Resurrection-body. We shall have been "clothed upon."

It can only, then, point to a condition of disembodiment; in other words, to the Intermediate-life. That there can be a Presence of Christ there, is perfectly clear from the circumstance that He promised it to the dying robber.

Two passages from the Epistle to the Hebrews must next claim our notice.

St. Paul (assuming him to be the writer of this Epistle), in addressing Christians, says, "Ye are come unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the Heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the first born, which are written in Heaven, and to God, the Judge of all, and to *the spirits* of just men made perfect" (Heb. xii. 22 and 23).

The entire passage shows that he is referring to the present, and not to any future time. He does not say ye *shall* come, but "*are* come," and proceeds to enumerate what was *then existing*. In this enumeration are "the *spirits* of just men." But where? Surely not in the Heaven-life. That was still distant, and the apostle is speaking of what is present, and moreover, the word "spirits" involves disembodiment, which is not a characteristic of the Heaven-life.

If, then, these "spirits of just men" were at that time existing, though not in the Heaven-life, where were they? Only one answer is possible. They were in the Intermediate-life.

This inference is confirmed by another passage in the same Epistle. The Apostle has recounted the triumphs of faith, and referring to a long list of departed worthies, writes, "These all, having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise: God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us *should not be made perfect*" (Heb. xi. 40).

What does he mean by the words, "*not* made perfect"? In the first of these two passages he has spoken of "spirits of just men *made perfect*." In both

cases he is referring to the departed. Is he then contradicting himself? Not at all. He is simply teaching that the perfecting of the Intermediate-life is a perfecting which concerns only the *spirits* of men —a perfecting of character and nature. There is another perfecting which will come only with the Resurrection—the re-clothing of man with an immortal body. The perfecting of the spirit takes place in the Hades-life; while that of the body does not.

Now, inasmuch as St. Paul described these departed worthies as "not made perfect," it is evident that he intends us to view them as still remaining "unclothed" in the Hades-life.

Only one other passage remains for our consideration. It is a very important one.

In 2 Cor. xii. 2-4, St. Paul writes, "I knew a man in Christ above fourteen years ago, (whether in the body, I cannot tell; or whether out of the body, I cannot tell; God knoweth;) such an one caught up to the third heaven. And I knew such a man, (whether in the body, or out of the body, I cannot tell; God knoweth;) how that he was caught up into Paradise, and heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter."

It is obvious that the words, "I knew a man," refer to the Apostle himself. His statement in the preceding verse, "It is not expedient for *me*, doubtless, to glory. I will come to visions and revelations of the Lord," makes this evident. Besides, we cannot imagine that, had the person been other than himself, St. Paul would not have been able to distinguish the difference between an "unclothed" spirit, and a being in a body of flesh. The "man," then, was the Apostle himself, and his reason for suppressing his name was, as the context shows, to avoid all appearance of boasting. Notice, next, that the experience into which he entered while yet connected with the Earth-life, in no way impaired his conscious personality. Twice he says "whether in the body, or out of the body, I cannot tell." Of one thing he was quite certain, that whether, or not, he had carried his body with him into that experience, he could yet think, see, hear and understand. Further, he names the place into which he was "caught up"—"Paradise."

It is impossible to mistake the import of his words. He, a Jew, employs a well-known Hebrew term which

his Master Himself had used. And that term denoted the Hades-World.

The passage is the record of an experience completely unique. St. Paul, doubtless, without his body, was taken, while yet his Earth-life was unfinished, into Paradise — the Intermediate life. Perhaps the reason why he, while yet a tenant of an "earthly house," was permitted to visit a world into which other mortals are not permitted to enter until the moment of death, was that his grasp upon eternal truths might be the greater. Certainly his subsequent writings indicate that this result had been effected. As to this experience having taken place *before* death, surely it is conceivable that, as Lazarus at the bidding of Christ could re-inhabit a body which had died, so St. Paul, at a like bidding, could have been temporarily separated from a body which may have been in a condition of sleep or trance.

This, then, constitutes the review of the passages in Holy Scripture, which establish the truths embodied in the three foregoing propositions, viz., that man, although deprived by death of his earthly body, survives his change of condition, as a conscious

personality, and continues his existence, not in Heaven, or Hell, but in the Intermediate-life.

**Other truths concerning the Hades-life, which may be deduced from the foregoing statements of Holy Scripture.**

The passages brought forward in support of our three main propositions suggest, if they do not explicitly state, a great deal more than is embraced in those propositions.

It will be our task, now, to discover what deductions we may fairly and honestly draw from these inspired utterances.

## DEDUCTION I.

**That there will be no break in the continuity of our existence, in passing from the Earth-life to the Hades-life.**

There will be no losing of one's self at death, and after an interval of oblivion, re-starting existence under new conditions. Chapter II. of human experience is not the commencement of a new history. It is but the continuation of Chapter I. The one life merges into the other, just as the infant-life merges into the boy-life, and the boy-life into the man-life. The

underlying principle, the Consciousness, which existed in the infant-life, passed untouched into the boy-life, and is continued in the man-life.

It is so with our self—our Ego—in its passage from the Earth-life to the Hades-life. However different the sphere of existence may be, our self will be the same. There will be no gap in our consciousness. I shall be as much *myself* when divested of my body, as I am when stripped of my coat. Death will not change my being, but only its environment. The drawing of my last breath will not make me, practically, *another* being with a different set of thoughts, feelings, impulses and emotions. It will simply usher me into another condition of life as the same "I."

As we shall leave off at the close of the Earth-life, we shall begin in the Hades-life.

Is this the teaching of the Bible? Yes. The prophet Samuel re-visits earth from the Unseen World. He has the shape, the voice, and the thoughts of a man. He is the same Samuel. He talks to Saul almost word for word as he had been wont to converse with him before leaving the Earth-life.

The Samuel of earth, and the Samuel of Hades

was the same person, unchanged by death, except that the grosser body was gone.

Moses talks with the world's Redeemer on a mountain of northern Palestine. He is very real, and St. Peter, with his Jewish instincts, identifies, at once, the visitant who has come, he knows not whither, as the great departed Law-giver of his people. It is the same Moses who had once dwelt on earth, with a similar bent of mind, and feelings. In the Earth-life, his thoughts had been concentrated on the sacrificial system of the Levitical Dispensation. Our glimpse of him as he steps from out the Hades-life, shows him to be still thinking in the same channel. The thought of sacrifice was still uppermost, for St. Luke tells us that he spake of Christ's *decease* which should be accomplished at Jerusalem. There had been no break in the consciousness and mind which had been transferred from Earth to Hades.

Again, the words of our Lord to the dying robber teach the same truth. The position of the adverb, "To-day," in the sentence, in the Greek, indicates that the writer intended it to be emphatic. The dying men upon the crosses, within a few hours, were

to pass from one world to another, but with their consciousness unimpaired: "To-day, *thou*, to whom I am speaking, shalt be with *Me*, the Being who is addressing thee, in Paradise."

Once more, St. Paul, with his intense individuality, his exalted feelings, and devotion to his Lord, had "a desire to depart." But can we think that he would have had that desire, unless he had been absolutely convinced that in being with Christ in the "unclothed" Life, he would remain the *same* Paul, unchanged in his sentiments? In spite of the hardships of his Earth-life, he so rejoiced in the sense of his Master's presence as to write, "To me to live is Christ" (Phil. i. 21). Yet in the next line, he added, "To die is gain." But how so, unless the mind and faculties by which he enjoyed Christ were to pass uninjured through the ordeal of dying? If death was capable of denuding him of his power of thinking, loving, and enjoying, so far from its becoming a gain to him, it would be a direct loss. Nor will any consideration of his blissful lot in a distant future alter the fact.

May we not, therefore, conclude from such texts as the above, that in undergoing the experience of

dying, our Self will persist untouched and unharmed?

And what is the Self? Not, assuredly, our body, except we be prepared to admit that the loss of a limb entails a corresponding diminishing of our individuality. If I should be less a conscious being with one arm than I am with two, then, of course, the disintegration and dissolution of my *whole* body may mean the loss of *myself*. But my body and my Self are not one and the same. My Self is a living Principle — a Consciousness — which thinks, feels, perceives and understands; clothed with a *form*, indeed, but a form less coarse than my outer bodily form, which latter is its encasement in the Earth-life. Changes and disasters which may befall the encasement, do not, necessarily, affect the Self who inhabits it. An earthquake may lay a building in ruins; but the destruction of the tenant is not inevitably involved. It may only cause a change of residence.

It is so with regard to our Self and our body.

The latter may experience many and great changes, and at last, its great disaster—death. But the Self will survive them all.

This is a truth to which science bears witness.

The particles which compose our body are in a condition of continual ebb and flow.

So much so, that in less than seven years the whole bodily structure has been dissolved and re-modelled. And in the case of a man of fifty, this demolition and re-building has taken place at least seven times.

Yet the person himself has persisted through it all. This may be easily enough proved by any one, however unskilled in science.

Cast your mind back over past years. You can remember a circumstance which happened thirty, forty, or fifty years ago. What has occurred during the interval? Your brain, and your whole bodily organisation in every particle has been changed over and over again. As far as your body is concerned, not one atom of it existed, as such, when that circumstance took place. Moreover, you are quite sure that you, remembering the event, are the identical person who years ago experienced it. All the argument in the world would not convince you to the contrary. But how can this be, unless you—your real Self—have existed through all those years, and all those changes?

Now, Holy Scripture only supplements what

Science affirms about our Self's power of persistence. It tells us that when the greatest change of all—death—shall come, we who have before survived so many changes, shall survive that also, and without a break in the continuity of our existence pass into the Hades-life.

It will not be uninstructive to note the bearing upon Christian thought and experience of this Deduction and others, which we shall make from the foregoing statements of Scripture.

**The bearing of this, our first, as to there being no break in the continuity of our existence in passing from the Earth-life to the Hades-life.**

*It is calculated to dispel much of the terror with which Death is regarded by even sincere Christians.*

However deeply rooted our belief in a Hereafter, there is, in the case of all, a shrinking from the thought of dying. It is natural that it should be so. Besides the pain which attends the wrenching of one's self from his physical encasement, there is that feeling of strangeness which must accompany an

entrance upon a new environment, and, moreover, the regret at being dissociated from so much which by long familiarity has become endeared to us. This latter, perhaps, more than anything else, constitutes the pang of dying.

Christ's Gospel has robbed death of its deadliest sting, and irradiated it with hope; but dying, nevertheless, involves, at least for a time, an existence apart from those whose life has hitherto been interwoven with our life. And there must be an element of grief in this, unless our religion has de-humanized us.

I am aware there are some who will tell us that a sincere Christian should long to die, and that if he does not experience that inclination, it is a sure indication that there is something spiritually amiss with him. I am afraid that I can only view such utterances as being the outcome of unreality, for the reason that I have known persons sing, with very great unction, hymns which represent the singer as panting for death, who, nevertheless, when a cold has been contracted, have evinced the greatest terror at the bare prospect of the Almighty taking them at their word.

I do not say that under no circumstances is it conceivable that one may wish to die. Under great hardship, or intense mental and bodily suffering, many have desired to do so; St. Paul among the number. I have stood at death-beds, and heard the pain-racked sufferer pray for death, and thought it no wrong to kneel down and join in that petition. There has been sincerity in such prayers, wrung as they have been from the depths of human distress.

But if any person in comparative health, and under tolerable circumstances, were to profess to me that he wished to die, so far from accounting it an indication of exalted spirituality, I should view it as being a proof that he stood in need of medical treatment.

We chide our boy who grumbles at his school-life, and imagines that he would like to leave it. Are they less deserving of censure, who by an assumed impatience to get out of the Earth-life, make but a sorry acknowledgment to God for His gift of the same?

The truth is, no one, except under very exceptional circumstances, can restrain a shudder at the thought of dying. Not even our Lord Himself was unmoved

by the approach of death. And although, in the hour of actual dissolution, there will be vouchsafed to every Christian man, as there was to Christ, an upholding and an uplifting of the spirit, by which all dread of death will vanish; yet until that hour shall come, more or less defined, the dread will exist.

In this way, the Christian's anticipations of death, will, unlike those of his subsequent experiences, be in excess of his realisations.

But this natural shrinking at the thought of death is a very different thing from living in *terror* of it. The one will add a sobering complexion to our life; the other will embitter it. The one will make us thoughtful; the other, miserable. The one is a timidity which a closer contact will remove; the other an aversion which nearness will but intensify.

There are many sincerely good persons who are terribly appalled at the prospect of death. There is no need that we should think them the less Christian on account of this. Their terror will, most certainly, vanish when they come to die. They have God's distinct promise that it shall be so.

But while the event is short of actual occurrence, it flings an awful shadow upon their life. Why is

this? Because of the physical pain which will attend it? Hardly so, since many a person with a terror of death, will courageously face a suffering compared with which that of dying is light. Is it because it will involve for a time a separation from those dearest to us? This, after all, is only akin to the experience of one who may have to leave home and friends for a distant part of the world. It may produce regret; it cannot evoke terror. Is it, then, because death is unilluminated by hope, and there is no expectation of a Resurrection and a Heaven? No; both truths may be implicitly believed; but they are *future* facts—how future, is not known—and meanwhile, *what?* Nothing definite. No intense conviction of the unbroken continuity of life. No certainty that the moment after death we shall be the same living, thinking and feeling personalities that we have been the moment before.

No thought that when that solemn scene will be enacted at an open grave, into which our body will be committed, we—our real Selves—*shall be living*, and for all we know to the contrary, may perhaps, be listeners to our Church's grand words of Resurrection and *Life*.

It is the absence of this definiteness concerning the Life after Death which invests dying with such terrors. Tell me that, at the moment of dissolution, I shall lose my consciousness; that there will be a gap in my existence; that I shall, practically, pass into nothingness, until the Resurrection-morning, and I shiver at the thought of being thus chloroformed by Death. Tell me that there *is* an unseen life; but, at the same time, that it is dim and shadowy; nebulous and intangible; a world of strangeness and unreality, and I dread the knock of Death which will summon me to such a sphere.

But on the other hand, make the Hades-life what the Bible shows it to be—a real life; an unbroken continuance of a life commenced on earth; a life where I shall be the *same* man as I am now—and oh! what a different aspect will Death bear. No longer will it be "the king of Terrors." The realisation of that Life will denude him of his power to appal me.

Pain and distress may be his ministers in attendance, but they will be but the officers who strike off the chains which bind me down to earth; the birth-pangs, by which I—my real Self—shall pass from the womb of the material to the life of the spiritual.

The realisation, then, of the truth that the passing from the Earth-life to the Hades-life will involve no break in the continuity of our existence, will remove our terror of death.

I shall not, indeed, before the time arrives for me to do so, want to die, because God has appointed me to live awhile in the Earth-life, and many a beloved companion, and many a circumstance make the Lower-school in which God is training me very dear. But when the time shall come for me to enter the "Higher-school"—the Intermediate-life, I shall not, I think, be distressed; certainly I shall not be appalled. My Self will undergo no change, except that of environment. And when God shall have cut away the ropes which moor me to earth, possessed of my thoughts and feelings, my love and desires, I shall learn that for my Self "there is no death, what seems so is transition."

## DEDUCTION II.

**That in the Hades-life, we shall recognise, and be brought into relationship with those whom we have previously known in the Earth-life.**

If, as we have endeavoured to show, we shall be, in the Intermediate-World, the same living, thinking and speaking beings as on earth, what will constitute an important factor in the continuity of our life in that sphere?

The re-establishment of intercourse between ourselves and those with whom we have before been in contact.

We may, perhaps, never have reflected that *how* we think and feel; *how* we regard things; and *how* the tone and complexion has been imparted to our character, is very greatly due to our intercourse with others. In the moral universe, as in the physical world, an independent existence is impossible.

For example. You have a certain attribute, or quality, called love; it may be for wife, parent, child, or friend. It is part of your consciousness, and consequently, part of your Self. Take it away,

and you will have got rid of part of that Self. Without it, you will be less a consciousness than you would be with it, in the same way as a body wanting a limb, will be less a body than another in which the defect does not exist.

You have another quality called friendship. Take that away, too, and you will have got rid of still more of your consciousness—of your Self. Go on with the process; get rid, one after another, of all the distinctive attributes of your character, and at last, you will become, practically, *another* being. There would be no more sense in calling you, then, the *same* being, than there would be in describing a watch as the *same* watch, after the removal of its old interior. You might substitute a new set of works for the old; but it would be no longer the same watch.

This is perfectly in harmony with the utterance of Scripture. When a man devoid of certain spiritual instincts, becomes possessed of them, and enters upon the Christian life, he is described as "a *new* creature." The new world of thought and aspiration into which he enters, in turning to Christ, has no connection with the old moral world in which he had formerly moved.

In his thoughts and feelings, as a Christian, he is not the *same* being, as he was when an unbeliever.

By a like reasoning, if we are to continue the same in our consciousness, in the Hades-life, as we have been, in the Earth-life, it must follow that we shall take with us, there, our love, friendships and sympathy—in a word, all that makes us what we are.

But from what did these qualities of our Self arise? From contact and intercourse with others. I should never have loved as a husband, but for a wife; nor as a father, but for a child; nor as a son, but for a parent; nor as a friend, but for a companion. If I had had no contact with sorrowful ones, I should never have experienced sympathy; and had there been no association with Christ-like men and women, I should have had but a poor appreciation of goodness.

My *entire* consciousness will pass into the Hades-life, and consequently, my love, friendship and sympathy, for these are parts of it.

They came into existence, and continued as parts of me, because of my contact with others. Are those others to be unrecognised and unknown by me

there? It is difficult to believe it. Were it so, how can I be sure that my Self (at all events as far as concerns my love and sympathy) will remain the same? The noblest and purest of all love is a mother's love. But it owes its origin to, and maintains its intensity by, contact with the child. In the Hades-life, would the love remain were the child unrecognised?

Moreover, may not the renewal, in that life, of intercourses which have been interrupted by Death, be the very means employed by God for re-kindling in us many a noble quality which has grown to be feeble and attenuated, from want of contact with the one who had been instrumental in calling it into being? It may be, you are a parent, and loved years ago, a child. But God took him from you, and because the intercourse was broken, the quality of love within you became in after years less marked than of old. But what, if when you step into the Unseen-World, a renewed contact with your child should cause the smouldering embers to leap into a flame!

Long ago, the noble glow of unselfish friendship irradiated your character. But your friend died, and

since then there has been a coldness and a reserve in your manner. But what if in the Hades-life the old loving familiarity be restored, and the glow break forth once more!

It would seem an intolerable thought that the Almighty Father should allow our being to be so interwoven with that of others, as that they should have been instrumental in evoking, determining, and maintaining our thoughts, feelings, and impulses, and then, that He should not let us know them in the Hades-life.

You may crowd that Life with troops of resplendent angels, and throng its "many mansions" with "spirits of just men made perfect"; but, methinks, I shall pass them all by, and be uninterested and unsatisfied, until I shall meet there those whom "I have loved long since, and lost awhile."

Have we a basis in Holy Scripture, for such belief? Yes.

Disembodied Samuel was recognised both by the woman of Endor, and by the guilty King, at whose bidding she had summoned the departed prophet to Earth again.

Disembodied Moses was identified as the great

departed Lawgiver, by the Apostles, on the mountain of Transfiguration.

Jesus, in the throes of death, soothed the anguish of the tortured robber, by telling him that, that day, he should be with Him in Paradise.

What a solemn mockery, if the companions on the crosses were not to know, and be brought into contact with, each other in Hades!

If we believe the statements of our Bible, we cannot doubt that we shall recognise, in the Intermediate-life, those whom we have known in the Earth-life.

The yearnings of our nature ask that it *may be* so; the necessity of our being requires that it *should be* so; while the utterance of God's Word proclaims that it *is* so.

## The bearing of this Deduction upon our Christian thought and experience.

*It mitigates the pain which attends separation, by Death, from those we love.*

That is an experience which every one of us has to face. and it is probably of all experiences the most bitter.

Consider it a moment. You, we will suppose, are a warm-hearted, affectionate man, sufficiently like Christ to want someone, be she mother, sister, or wife upon whom you may lavish your love. God gives you a wife, and as the years roll on, the interests, experiences, hopes, joys and sorrows of both become so interwoven that you "twain are one flesh." But Death comes, and with it separation. Henceforward, the bond which linked you together exists, you think, only as a memory; and an awful blight of bereavement and disappointment settles upon your future.

Or, it may be, you are a gentle, self-denying mother, and for the child whom God has given you, you would sacrifice your life if occasion required. But he dies, and a saddened, far-away look in the eyes tells that the music of your life has resolved itself into the minor key. You hold the Christian faith, as it is commonly taught, but it is shadowy and indefinite, and does not illumine the dark gulf of separation between you and your boy. You would be hurt were anyone to question your belief in a Hereafter for the child and yourself. But somehow or another the belief does not remove the feeling that you have *lost* your child.

Such is a common enough experience, but a very dreadful one.

But what if you import into that experience the truth concerning an Intermediate-life! What if you believe, as you stand in the death-chamber, that the white, coffined form is no more your wife, or child, than the dress or coat which hangs disused in the wardrobe! What if you can realise that they are living, that instant, as really as you yourself are, and that when your time to leave the Earth-life shall come, you and they shall meet and talk, love and be together, as in days past!

When transfigured with such thoughts, what a very different aspect does separation bear. What an element of grief-assuaging expectation is infused into our sorrow for the departed when we are convinced that the relationships of the Earth-life, except those into which the carnal element enters, will be renewed in the Hades-life.

The mother who on earth taught her little one to say its prayers, will, I believe, in the Intermediate-life, be the one who will teach the same little one more and more of God and truth.

The friend of the Earth-life who has influenced us

for good, depend upon it, will be the one, in the Hades life, who will be used by God to woo us on to higher spiritual attainments The beloved parent, parted from our sight for years, will be the one to greet us as we step over the threshold of the Unseen World.

Nor can I account such deeply-cherished longings the outcome of fancy.

In the course of my duty, I was ministering at the death-bed of a young woman. She was dying of consumption in the Hospital, and was perfectly conscious to the last. Immediately before she passed away, she called, by name, a sister who had died two years previously. Then, opening wide her eyes, which had a look in them which it was impossible to mistake—a look of recognition,—she said as a smile passed over her thin, wasted face, "I am coming, Annie, dear." The next instant she was gone. My own belief is that that girl passed into the next life in company with a sister whom she recognised, and who had been permitted to come to her at the moment of death.

Why should it be thought incredible that this was the case? We, as Christians, profess to believe the

Bible, and in it are recorded instances of the departed having reappeared on earth, and yet when we are confronted with testimony, borne by those as truth-loving as ourselves, regarding like appearances, we shake our heads and pronounce it an impossibility, or a delusion. Why should it be either the one or the other? If it be an impossibility, then departed Samuel and Moses were *not* seen by those living on this earth when they re-visited it after death, and consequently, no reliability can be placed on the utterances of Scripture.

If it be a delusion, then it is so ingrained in human experience, that mankind of every condition, clime and age has been under it, while an inspired Apostle himself fell a victim to it.

I will not assert that these accounts of appearances after death, current in all quarters of the globe, and extending as far back as human history reaches, are truthful in every case and in all particulars. It has ever been man's part, whether in religion or anything else, to encrust truth with error and exaggeration. But I do say that it would have been impossible for there to be this world-wide testimony as to these appearances, if there had been no substratum of truth in it.

That truth is, that, in numerous well-attested instances, the departed have been seen and recognised by those still remaining in the Earth-life. And thus another reason is afforded us for believing that our contact with them in the Hades-life will embrace recognition.

We Christians, for the most part, have invested death with such surroundings as, practically, to give the lie to our faith. The hideous paraphernalia of woe; the pagan symbolism which lurks under our Burial customs; the disfigurement of our tombs and gravestones with the representation of skulls and crossbones; our habit of speaking and thinking of a departed one as if non-existent—what is all this but a potent hindrance to the realisation of the fact of the Intermediate-life.

For the credit of our religion, let it be said that we are slowly advancing to a better perception of truth. But to the minds of many, the mists of uncertainty and vagueness hang thickly about "the valley of the shadow of death." I have lost for a while by death many near and dear to me, and before I had grasped this grand truth of the Hades-life, I thought of them as *dead*.

Twenty-two years ago, the first—a sister of seventeen—departed. I was wont every Sunday afternoon to visit her grave. To me she seemed to be lying there. I felt that, beside that mound, I was near a *dead* loved one.

God has taught me much since then. I think of her, now, not as a lifeless form awful in the dissolution of death, but as a *living* being, as conscious as I am; in company with a beloved father and others who have since joined her in that Unseen-world. To me, neither she, nor they, are dead.

Many years later, I stood beside the death-bed of another sister, and saw her, with unclouded mind, under most terrible physical suffering, calmly look into the face of death without a shudder or a fear. Almost her last words were to promise that she would always pray for us, and would give our love to that separated father and others whom she was joining, and would tell them that I never forget them in my prayers.

Is any reader of these words shocked at the mention of "prayers for the dead"? They are not prayers for the dead; but prayers for the *living;* for

has not Jesus said, "all *live* unto God"? Does not Christ's religion teach us to pray for one another, and can there be found one passage in God's Word which says that we must *not* pray for our dear ones, when once they have been separated from us?

What an inexpressible sadness there is in the false idea that it is wrong to utter such prayers.

Up to the moment of death we may plead ever so earnestly with our Heavenly Father for a dear one: an instant later, we must not. What an inconsistency, when we profess to believe that that one is still living, and has but changed his locality!

On the other hand, what an immeasurable consolation and mitigation of the pang of separation is it, if we think our prayers may go with, and follow him into the Intermediate-life!

I know of nothing which will make that Life so much a reality to us, and which will bring home to our mind the truth that there will be re-union and recognition there, as this remembrance of the departed at the throne of grace. Instead of the bond which has hitherto existed between us and them being rudely snapped asunder by death, such prayer does but strengthen it, by associating it the

more closely with God. And instead of the former love and sympathy between us resolving themselves into fading memories connected with a receding past, both are preserved, and gather intensity as the time of re-union approaches.

Thus, prayer for the departed keeps alive our faith in the truth of recognition and re-union in the Unseen-World; while that truth bridges, as nothing else can do, the terrible gulf of separation; and so becomes one of the grandest of influences for diverting our gaze from "things temporal," and fixing it upon "things eternal."

## DEDUCTION III.

**That there are different spheres of experience in the Hades-life.**

Here again, the statements of the Bible, not less than the dictates of reason, compel us to differ *in toto* from the popular, but crude, conception entertained.

The prevalent idea is that when a person in a state of salvation crosses the frontier of Earth-life, and steps into the Hades-life, he is introduced at

once into a place or condition, where all differences and distinctions will be for ever obliterated.

Two men, both of them Christians, in the Earth-life, may be altogether dissimilar in character and spiritual attainments; yet it is supposed this dissimilarity will vanish as soon as they enter the next world.

In the latter, according to the teaching of some, there will be no diversity either in character or surroundings. Uniformity will prevail throughout. All will be equally circumstanced; all, in character and attainments, counterparts one of another; and all, to exactly the same degree, saved and possessed of an immediately-acquired moral and spiritual perfection. The repentant prize-fighter and wife-murderer, we are told, will step from the scaffold into the blissful condition and locality occupied by St. John and St. Paul; and this, the instant he enters the Intermediate-life.

The only supposition under which it would be possible to conceive of this being the case, is that the *act of dying* works a moral miracle.

If the gasping out of one's last breath be invested with such potency as to instantaneously transform

a sinner into a saint; a man with no character, into a being endowed with every grace, then, we might conceive of uniformity of life and experience in the Hades-life. But not otherwise.

The fact is, God's moral miracles are wrought not in the act of dying; but in the act of *living*. Moral perfection is no more reached at a single bound than is physical and intellectual perfection. No mere change of locality will effect it.

But although human existence in the Hades-World, will present differences in characters and experiences, there are certain Earth-life dissimilarities which will disappear.

The unlikeness between men, arising from the *adventitious* circumstances of Earth-life, will cease to exist in the Intermediate-life. In this world, one man may exhibit mental culture and refinement in taste; while the mind of another may be undeveloped, and his habits boorish. And when we come to trace the cause of this difference, it may be found to hinge upon a mere question of money.

The dissimilarity between the two men would, probably, not have existed, at least, not to the same extent, if the fathers of both had been so pecuniarily

circumstanced as to have been able to afford to their son the like advantages of education.

Thus the adventitious circumstance of being possessed of a few hundred pounds may be the determining cause whereby one man, in this life, moves in a different intellectual and social sphere from that of another man.

But, in the Intermediate-life it will not be so. Whatever differences may there exist, this element of causation, certainly, will not.

When a man steps into that Life, the veneer of worldly position will peel off from him. Dives will leave behind him his "purple and fine linen," as Lazarus, his poverty and rags. The man who is descended from an earl, and has lived in a palace, will not, on that account, be assigned a sphere marked off from that which will be occupied by a blacksmith's son who may have dwelt in a cottage. The differences which exist there, are *moral* differences, arising from variety in *character and spiritual attainment*.

There is such a thing as a "*babe* in Christ," and a "*man* in Christ." If one enters that Life as a "babe" in character and spiritual attainment, he

must not expect that his lot, so long as he remains a "babe," will be cast among "spirits made perfect." There would be as much unfitness in it, as there would be in transplanting a child from an Infant-school into a University, or in apportioning to a boy the environment of a man. St. Paul, as we have seen, was permitted an experience of the Intermediate-life of a very exalted kind, and he is very careful to describe his condition, at the time, as that of a "*man* in Christ" (2 Cor. xii. 2). Had he been a "babe" when that experience was vouchsafed to him, his being "caught up into Paradise," would not have involved his entrance into "the *third* heaven," or sphere, of it.

Let us examine more closely this truth, as to there being different spheres of experience and life in Hades.

There is certainly a great difference between the experience and life of those who enter that World in a state of salvation, and those who do not. By a "state of salvation," I mean what our Church means, when she uses in her Catechism the same expression. It does not imply that the character *has been* moulded, and the spiritual nature developed. It

simply denotes that a person is on the right road to that end. He may only have advanced a few steps along that road, or he may have accomplished the half, or even the greater part of the distance. But, whatever may be the stage he has reached, he is in a "state of salvation."

If, in leaving the Earth-life, and passing into the Hades-life, one man be in that "state," and another be not, the sphere of continued existence will be different. The parable of the rich man and Lazarus teaches this. The existence of both men is therein depicted as it was immediately after death.

Both, according to the Greek, had passed into Hades; but not into the same sphere. Their experiences were widely dissimilar. The beggar's was one of relief and happiness; the unfeeling, rich man's, that of self-reproach and unhappiness.

Moreover, to emphasize this fact of difference in sphere, our Lord represents Abraham as saying, that between Lazarus and Dives "is a great gulf fixed"—a gulf formed by dissimilarity in taste, desire, and character, between one loving God, and another not loving Him; between one whose moral

and spiritual instincts are developing, and another in whom those instincts are wanting.

Nor need we think it strange that there should be this gulf. It exists in this Earth-life, although not so sharply defined. It yawns between the Christian and the unbeliever. In the noblest part of their being—their sympathies and aspirations—they are separated.

Sharers though they may be in the same external circumstances of life, there is, nevertheless, an inner domain of thought in which the Self of each is dwelling apart from the other.

It is so in the Hades-life, only with this difference, that when the extraneous surroundings of Earth-life shall have disappeared, the moral and spiritual distinction will be the more apparent.

Again, there are different spheres of experience and life, in the case of those entering Hades *in a "state of salvation."*

There are some who pass into that Life, mellowed and ripened, after sixty or seventy years of training by God the Holy Ghost. There are others who in middle-life have turned to Christ, and within a year or two afterwards, enter it. Many have disregarded

religion until the hair has become whitened, and then, within a few months of their change, depart thither. And a few do not seek the Saviour until the sands of life are on the point of running out.

The whole of an octogenarian Earth-life is not too long for the formation of the Christ-life character, and the development of the spiritual nature; and yet millions of Christians die before reaching the age of thirty.

What are we to imagine concerning these? That the same sphere of life and experience will be equally suitable to all? Assuredly not. Some, at the moment of translation, have but planted their feet on the lowest rungs of the ladder, whose top is perfection. Others have ascended many rungs. Some are half-way up; while a comparative few are within a measurable distance of the top. Will there be no difference in the altitude of the one who is at the bottom of the ladder, and that of the man who has all but reached the top? The higher the ascent, the more comprehensive the range of vision. A man with an unformed character and an undeveloped spiritual nature, would be as out of place and uncomfortable in the "*third heaven*" of Paradise, as

a barn-door fowl translated to a lofty crag of the Alps, or as the blind fish in the cave of Kentucky were they suddenly located in the ocean. An adaptation to environment would be wanting.

Just as, in the physical universe, beings find their lot cast in a sphere suitable to their capacities, and can only rise to higher spheres of existence by a corresponding enlargement of capacities, so is it in the Intermediate-life. In the new experience into which we enter at death, we gravitate to a sphere, for which, by the character we have formed during the Earth-life, we have adapted ourselves. Our position there will answer exactly to the degree of sanctification which has been wrought in us by the Holy Ghost, in the period before death. The road to the distant goal of moral and spiritual perfection is a long one, and every inch of the way must be traversed. When death overtakes those who, for many years, have been patiently and perseveringly plodding along that road, they will find themselves, in the Unseen-life, within a measurable distance of the end. On the other hand, when death comes to those who have but only just commenced the journey, the goal will be far ahead. And between

the starters and the finishers will be an intervening distance.

### The bearing of this Deduction upon our Christian thought and experience.

*It will impress upon us, as no other consideration will, the vast importance of cultivating, in* THIS LIFE, *our character and spirit.* It will lead us Christians to do what St. Paul, with his knowledge of the Intermediate-life, urged that we should do—"work out our own salvation with fear and trembling." It will be impossible with this truth in view to be careless as to the cultivation of character. Knowing the intimate connection which exists between our character here, and our experiences hereafter, we shall not live slip-shod Christian lives, in the hope that, somehow or another, all will come right at the moment of death. And yet thousands, who are not insensible to Christ's Gospel, are so living. Why is it that so many Christians never seem to grow in grace? Why is there so little effort to rid themselves of defects in character? Why, after thirty years of Christian instruction, do they appear no nearer moral perfection? How comes it that there are such

beings as "*unlovely*" Christians, who in spite of their church-going and orthodoxy, are cold, unsympathetic, selfish, or cross-tempered?

Is it not that, intermingled with their belief, there is an idea that, after all, the cultivation of character, during the Earth-life, is not a matter of paramount concern; that so long as certain doctrines be held, and certain religious ordinances observed, all will be right at the last; that as soon as they step out of this world, there will be a wonderful moral-transformation, and in an instant, apart from any effort of theirs, they will become all that they sincerely desire to become?

Thousands of Christian people are positively indifferent about the formation of character, because they do not realise that God means what He says, when He states, that "whatsoever a man soweth, *that* shall he also reap."

Take, for a moment, this particular passage.

What, let me ask, is the interpretation put upon it by nine out of every ten persons? I venture to say that it has been so explained by a number of theologians, as to mean the *exact opposite* of what it asserts.

I will instance the case of a man, to whom, inasmuch as he accepts and believes the doctrines of Christianity, the term "Christian" cannot be denied. But he has never grasped the truth concerning existence in the Intermediate-life, and as a consequence, he has been careless about the development of character. He knows that a dying robber, even after a life of indifference and wickedness, turned to a pitiful Saviour, and was saved. However faulty he may be, he is not so bad as that man was, and he hopes and believes that his moral crookednesses will be made straight, and the cavities of character filled in, *some day*. Press him for an answer to the question as to *when* this will happen, and he will reply that he supposes it will be *when he dies*. Why he should think so, he does not know; he cannot adduce a single passage of Scripture to warrant the assumption; he only supposes it will be so.

But all the time, he is overlooking a most important consideration, which is, that his neglect of character constitutes a moral seed-sowing, in regard to which the reaping in another Life will correspond. The thought may be distasteful, but he can no more get

away from the fact, than he can ignore the parallel law which obtains in the physical universe, viz., that weed-seeds produce weeds, and corn-seeds, corn.

Because he has been unconcerned, or but little concerned, in regard to character, he may have acquired traits of selfishness and want of sympathy. Around his manner may have grown up a brusqueness, or unattractiveness. Bad-temper, irritability, peevishness, indolence, or untruthfulness may have been unchecked in his moral system.

This will have been a seed-sowing, and with regard to that, God has said, "Whatsoever a man soweth, *that* shall he also reap." The man, at last, dies; repentant for his sins; really sorry that he is not better; and with a sincere faith in Christ as his Saviour.

What then? Will such an one reap *as* he had sown? Ask the majority of Christian teachers. Will not this be the sort of answer you will elicit? "Well, no: you see that man died in the Christian faith. His sins have been pardoned, and the imperfections, cavities, and want of development in his character and spiritual nature all disappeared

at the moment of death. *As a believer*, he will *not* reap as he had sown. Had he been an *unbeliever*, of course, he would have done so."

And in this way, the statement of Scripture that one will reap *as*, *i.e.*, *according as* he has sown, is flatly contradicted. It is made to be an untruth with regard to some persons. It is a fact in the case of unbelievers; it is *not* so in that of believers.

But I take exception to this kind of teaching, and say, that we cannot so juggle with God's eternal laws. They are universal in their application. This particular law of correspondence between sowing and reaping is as true of Christians as of those who are not Christians. There is not an indication in the Bible which warrants us in supposing that, in any instance, it will be inoperative. We shall reap, in the Intermediate-life, as we have sown in the Earth-life. The character we have shaped, and the spiritual advancement we have made here will correspond to the position which we shall occupy there. Those of us who are neglecting the formation of character may possibly enter the Hades-life in "a state of salvation"; because no one who turns to Christ, even at the eleventh hour, will

be lost; but the consequence of a past neglect will be experienced. Instead of passing into the "*third heaven*" of Paradise, an unformed character and undeveloped nature may require that we submit ourselves to the discipline and ordeal of a *lower* school.

If we be wise men, the truth that there are different spheres of experience in the Hades-World, will goad us into being earnest about our life and character. Just as we dare not be neglectful of our education in youth, because our position in later years will be affected thereby; so the cultivation of our moral and spiritual nature will be a task to which we shall devote ourselves, for the reason that we shall know that the neglect of it may involve a handicapping of ourselves in the life to come.

Thus, human existence will assume a greater responsibility and significance; new incentive will be given to the struggle after holiness; and a greater importance will attach itself to even the thoughts, looks, and words, as well as the actions, of our every-day life.

Then, our chief concern will be so to live, that when "the garish lights" of Earth shall wax dim,

and go out, we may enter into such a sphere of the Unseen-life as to pass easily on unto perfection.

## DEDUCTION IV.

**That a work of perfecting and developing will go on in the Hades-life.**

This Deduction arises naturally out of the preceding one, and is closely associated with it.

If, as we have seen, there are different spheres of life and experience in Hades, those spheres will be occupied by persons exhibiting various degrees of attainment. The character and spiritual nature of some will be inferior to that of others. Some will be nearer perfection than others. And yet both classes may consist of those who are in "a state of salvation."

But their being in "a state of salvation" involves their identification with a scheme which is pledged to accomplish in them a *perfecting*, bodily, morally and spiritually.

That is the work to which the Gospel stands committed. It is no mere device for rescuing men from Hell and the "Second Death"; but a

magnificent provision whereby they can be re-modelled into moral images of God.

Now, unless the Gospel is to fail in its purpose, one of three things must happen. Either the moral and spiritual perfecting of a Christian must take place *before death;* in *the act of dying;* or *in the Intermediate-life.* It cannot take place in the existence subsequent to this latter, *i.e.*, the Heaven-life, because that condition starts with perfection as an accomplished fact. We shall begin the Heaven-life with a Resurrection-body. Throughout the New Testament, the Resurrection is viewed, as being the Goal, or Consummation of Christ's Redemption. It will be the crowning act of a long continued work of perfecting. Inasmuch as there would be an incompatibility in associating, in the Heaven-life, a perfect body with an imperfect spirit, it follows that the occupant of the "heavenly-house" will be suitable for that house. In other words, the being of resurrection and life who will enter Heaven, will be a being from whose character and spirit every vestige of imperfection will have been eliminated. Our Lord's words surely teach this—"No man putteth a piece of *new* cloth unto an *old* garment."

When, then, is this perfecting of the spirit accomplished? Certainly, not entirely *before* death. However grand and beautiful the character of one may be at the close of a long Christian life, there are yet flaws and cavities in his nature which mark him as still being imperfect. If any be disposed to challenge this assertion, I would ask, how, otherwise, is it that many exemplary Christians, on their death-bed, have exhibited temper or selfishness?

Assuredly, it will not be accomplished *in the act of dying*, unless we do violence to our common sense, and upset all we know with regard to God's physical and spiritual laws. There is no more reason for thinking that the work of perfecting can be brought about suddenly by the disrupting hand of Death, than there is for supposing that the cracking of the shell will make the newly-hatched chick a full-grown fowl. To state that a repentant murderer, the moment after execution, will have a character devoid of fault, and a spirit replete with grace, is as contrary to sense, as saying that the Israelites, as soon as they had crossed the Red Sea, reached the Land of Promise.

The work of bringing a human spirit to a state of

full development and perfection, is infinitely greater than bringing anything in the physical universe to the same relative condition. And yet, in respect to physical things, nothing reaches perfection except by slow stages of growth and advancement. Are we to imagine that the *greater* work will be more easily achieved; that, while ages are required for the formation of the earth's crust, and years, for the growth of an oak-tree, the moments occupied in gasping out one's last breath, will suffice for the modelling of an unshaped character? It is no wonder that a theology which has taught this has failed to commend itself to scientific thought.

Seeing, then, that the perfecting of the spirit, in the majority of instances (at all events), is not accomplished *before* Death, and certainly, is not, in *the act of dying*, we are shut up to the conclusion that *this work will go on in the Intermediate-life.*

Before I proceed further with the discussion of this Deduction, let me say that I repudiate the doctrine of "Purgatory," as taught by the Roman Catholic Church. That doctrine, in my judgment, is materialistic, revolting, childish, and calculated to do immeasurable harm. History has shown that it

has been a powerful instrument in the hands of an unscrupulous priesthood for striking terror into the minds of an unenlightened and too credulous laity. It has, in the past, even caused religion to degenerate into a scheme of money-making.

But at the same time, it is too often forgotten that the grotesque doctrine has been built up upon a grand and sublime truth. The *foundation* is scriptural and good; but upon that foundation human teachers have reared a superstructure of rubbish. If it were not so—if there had been no foundation of truth—the doctrine of Purgatory would long since have ceased to be believed. There are thoughtful men, to-day, who do believe it, though not, perhaps, in its coarse, Mediæval representation; and how it becomes possible for them to do so, is, that underlying a very great amount of error is the truth, that, in the Hades-life, there is a work of perfecting and developing.

If the word "Purgatory" be used only to denote a "purging out" of sin and imperfection, I know of nothing objectionable in it. Our Church of England has not a word to say against it. What she condemns, in her 22nd Article, is the "*Romish doctrine* concerning Purgatory."

Two very weighty considerations render the fact of there being a perfecting and development in the Hades-life a *necessity*. One is: that it harmonises with what we know to be God's method of proceeding in the work of salvation. The other is, that it alone answers objections which can be urged against the *fair-dealing* of God.

Take the first consideration. What do we know in regard to the Almighty's work of saving men? Precisely what we know in respect to every other work of His, viz., that all has been done under, and in obedience to, His universal law of growth and development. That law obtains equally in the realm of spirit as in the world of matter. It has characterised the scheme of redemption throughout. Part of that scheme consists in revealing to mankind the central truth of the Gospel—the incarnation of God the Son, and His atonement for the sins of the world. Another part consists in destroying "the works of the devil." While a third, is to make man what he was intended to be—an image of God.

Now, it is quite clear that the work involved in the two first parts of this scheme has come under the great law of progression.

The truth of the Incarnation and Atonement was *very slowly and very gradually* made known to men.

Age after age of Levitical prefigurement and prophetical foreshadowing passed away before mankind knew the truth as we know it; and in our own times, the knowledge is being but slowly diffused; while the day seems yet distant when "the earth shall be filled with it, as the waters cover the sea" (Hab. ii. 14).

Then, again, the task of destroying "the works of the Devil" is *a very slow one*. The preaching of Christianity, for eighteen hundred years, has had an enormous influence for good on society. The world of to-day is vastly better than it was in the times of ancient Greece and Rome. But still the reign of Satan is far from being at an end.

We come to the third part of the Gospel scheme, which is to make man an image of God, and we are asked by some to believe that the law of gradual growth and development which is so plainly seen to be an underlying principle in the working out of the two first parts is laid aside in this. To put it in another way. In working out parts 1 and 2 of the Gospel scheme, God acts consistently with an uni-

versal law; while in working out part 3, He does not. This is no over-statement of the case. At eight o'clock a condemned felon, who in view of death has repented, is a wretched sinner with an unshapen character, an undeveloped mind, and any amount of evil tendencies. At five minutes past eight, the hangman's rope has launched him into the Intermediate-life, and, according to some, the work of salvation has been accomplished; with the exception of the crowning act, viz., that he will one day obtain a resurrection body. He may have been a Christian for less than one hour, but that does not prevent him from being transformed into a saint the instant he is removed from the Earth-life.

Those who teach such doctrine will admit that the formation of their own and other Christians' character is a very gradual work; that fifty or sixty years of Divine training is not too much to bring a man within a measurable distance of perfection. And yet they find no difficulty in believing, as regards some, that a work so transcendently hard can be effected in a few moments. Of course, we shall be told that the intervention of Death makes all the difference. But what is this but mistaking the power which Death is

capable of wielding. The domain of this Death is in the material and not in the spiritual. It can only touch the bodies of men; it cannot affect their spirits. A thousand deaths would never raise the soul who survived them one hair's breadth nearer moral or spiritual perfection.

But an escape from this difficulty is sometimes sought by saying that Death itself does not work this change in the spirit, but God does. It is said, "Would you limit the omnipotence of the Almighty? Is He not able to effect in an *instant* what, ordinarily, He only effects slowly and gradually?" My answer to this is, that it is not a question of what God is *able* to do, but what He *actually does*.

He *could* have revealed to mankind in a moment a Gospel which He took ages to unfold. He *could* have destroyed "the works of the devil" by one annihilating blow of His sledge-hammer of vengeance. He *could* have stifled every impulse to evil, and have caused every grace to start forth in full bloom within us, at our first cry for pardon.

But we are confronted with the fact that He has *not done* so, and to assert that He will lay aside His universal law and proceed on other lines, needs the

very strongest testimony of Scripture to make it believable.

That testimony is not forthcoming. There is not one passage in the Bible which states, or even implies, that the work of perfecting can be effected suddenly, or completed at the moment of death. Such passages as "Let us *go on* unto perfection" (Heb. vi. 1), "*Patient continuance* in well doing" (Rom. ii. 7), "Till we all come . . . unto a perfect man" (Eph. iv. 13), "The *spirits* of just men *made perfect*" (Heb. xii. 23), "He which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ" (Phil. i. 6), and a number of other like passages imply prolonged effort, and are fatal to the conception that the work of perfecting can be achieved easily or suddenly. They are in agreement with all that the Bible tells us of God's moral workings, and with all that science proclaims regarding His physical operations, viz., that "the God of patience" (Rom. xv. 5) does nothing spasmodically.

If, then, there be some who leave the Earth-life before ever the work of perfecting be commenced, as in the case of death-bed repentances; if there be others who die at an *early* age—and millions of Christians do

so; and if, moreover, there be those who, after a long life, are yet faulty in character and undeveloped in spirit, God's great law of growth and progression makes it a *necessity* that there should be a perfecting and developing in the Hades-life. And this particular phase of the work of Salvation is in harmony with all the other phases of it. There is uniformity throughout.

Glance now at the other consideration which makes a perfecting and developing in the Hades-life a *necessity*. I mean that which affects the question of *fair-dealing* on the part of God.

Now I am aware that, by some, it is supposed to be a sort of Christian duty to scare one off this ground by hinting that the discussion of God's *fair-dealing* savours of presumption. One may talk as much as one likes about His omnipotence and holiness, but this particular attribute of the Deity must not be subjected to enquiry.

If a crude presentment of Divine truth makes it difficult for us to see how this quality can be ascribed to God, the answer is always at hand,—"My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways My ways, saith the Lord" (Is. lx. 8).

But why, when this passage is quoted, is the context so persistently kept out of sight? The prophet tells us that God's ways are "*higher*" than our ways, and His thoughts than our thoughts. Divine qualities have been so pared away by some theologians, as not only to make them lower than the corresponding qualities in ourselves, but to destroy all resemblance to them. It is manifestly absurd to mean one thing by a certain word when applied to one person, and something different when referred to another. Fair-dealing on the part of the Almighty will be the same *in kind* as fair-dealing on our part; only it will be *greater* in quality and quantity.

I contend that a consideration of this quality of fair-dealing, which we ascribe to God, makes it necessary that a place be given to the work of perfecting in the Hades-life.

What is the state of things with which we are confronted? That hundreds of thousands of Christians are removed from the Earth *before* the work of perfecting and development has been effected? If that work can only be accomplished *prior* to the moment of death, have they been dealt

with fairly? If our position be disputed, viz., that there is growth and advancement in the Intermediate-life, then an early death will place them at a disadvantage for all eternity. Is it fair that to one man should be granted a long life to prepare for that eternity, while another's career should be closed almost as soon as the work has commenced? If the Earth-life be the *only* "School," how unjust to give one son a fifty years' training, and another son one.

And yet we are shut up to this conclusion, unless our Fourth Deduction be admitted.

## The bearing of this Deduction upon our Christian thought and experience.

*It imparts a reasonableness to our faith, and invests the Intermediate-life with increased interest.*

Take the first, that it imparts a reasonableness to our faith.

What is faith? Not an unthinking prostration of the mind before a code of theology, however venerable with age, or stamped with ecclesiastical authority. Not an unquestioning acquiescence in certain doctrines which may have passed muster as

Divine truth, two centuries ago; nor the mere association of one's self with orthodox Christianity.

All this may exist, and yet produce in a person nothing more than *credulity*.

Faith is man's grasp of God and truth *with his whole moral nature*. A certain divinely-implanted instinct in man, called by Plato "the something divine" (θεῖον τι), finds its correspondence in God and truth. In other words, the inner consciousness of man perceives, and does homage to, certain moral qualities, *e.g.*, love, mercy and fair dealing. When God is viewed as possessing those qualities in a pre-eminent degree, there is established between man and his Maker a relationship which rises above the domain of the intellectual and emotional, into that of the *moral*. The moral excellence of God appealing to a moral sense in man, lifts man out of the lower sphere of religious belief, into the higher domain of *faith*. Faith is impossible, unless we are able to believe that there exists in God the ideal of those moral qualities of which we have the perception in ourselves. Denude God of these attributes, and there can be no real moral grasp of Him.

And this applies to teaching concerning God

Invest theology with moral characteristics which are in harmony with our own intuitions, and at once an affinity is established between it and man's better nature. Shock the moral sensibilities by divesting theology of it, and religion, however earnest, will never rise above *credulity*. The hold on doctrine will be a matter of the brain, not of the moral nature; and as such it will fall short of *faith*.

We are astonished, sometimes, that what has passed currency for *faith*, should have been associated with so much that horrifies the mind of a right-thinking man. The Irish peasant will be punctilious in his attendance at Mass and Confession, but be none the less disposed to take part in a free-fight. The Romish Inquisitor subscribed most loyally to the Articles of His Church, but was ready, in the name of God, to inflict the most devilish torture upon a fellow-creature. The Calvinist divine wrote volumes in defence of Christianity, and yet attributed such conduct to the God of Love as outrages every sense of mercy and fair-dealing.

How are we to account for this? In no other way than that these persons' conceptions of the Almighty

were those in which the moral instincts play little or no part.

Where there has been on the part of theologians and the adherents to Christianity, a putting into the background of God's moral qualities of justice and fair-dealing, religion has before now degenerated, both in theory and practice, into a system disfigured by consummate selfishness and revolting heartlessness.

I venture to say that God has been preached as acting in a way towards His creatures, which is infinitely worse than anything ever ascribed to the vilest pagan deity; while deeds have been done in the name of Christianity which make us shudder as we read of them. Would you know how it was possible that men exhibiting, in many instances, characters noble and good, could, nevertheless, teach that "there are infants in hell a span long," and that the Almighty creates the great bulk of the human race for the express purpose of consigning it to eternal torment? Do you wonder how both Romanists and Protestants could have had the heart to torture and burn their fellow-men and women?

The answer is at hand. They failed to justly

estimate the moral qualities of God. The men who taught and did these things were holders of creeds; but the creeds were such as forbade the moral instinct in man finding its correspondence in God. To them, the Deity was an Almighty Despot from whose constitution the attributes of justice and fair-dealing had been eliminated. A distorted conception of the Divine Sovereignty caused God's moral qualities, upon which alone that Sovereignty subsists, to disappear. Is it any wonder that, when the eternal principles of justice and fair-dealing have been denied with respect to God, men should refuse to do homage to the mere thought of His Sovereignty! Tell me that God is Almighty, and link with His Almightiness the qualities of mercy and justice, and I can love Him. Strip His omnipotence of these qualities, and you will excite in my breast no more than a feeling of slavish fear. The creed of the Christian and the belief of the pagan will have the same foundation.

But when our conception of God and Divine truth is such as to make it unnecessary to put any one of His moral perfections into the background; when we can think of Him as *altogether* good, without making

a reservation in regard to one or more of His qualities; when, moreover, our code of theology is sufficiently comprehensive to admit of our thinking of Him without doing violence to our own moral instincts and sensibilities, then, and only then, will creed be invested with that reasonableness, which, commanding the allegiance of our moral nature, will lift us into the domain of real faith.

If a perfecting and developing of the spirit of man in the Intermediate-life be denied, we have no alternative but to drop out of our religious belief the thought of God's fair-dealing and justice. On the other hand, let it be admitted, and no dispensations of His Providence, howsoever mysterious, will ever crush our conviction that these two eternal principles of goodness are resident in Him.

Thus, one important bearing of our Fourth Deduction will be to impart to Christian doctrine a credibility and reasonableness begotten of moral sanction.

We turn, now, to another consideration :—the value of this Deduction *as investing the Intermediate-life with increased interest.*

It is astounding how small a place the subject of

the After-life occupies in the mind of Christians generally. It rarely forms the theme of the preacher; still less rarely, a topic of conversation in private life among even sincerely religious persons. A question of ecclesiastical antiquity, or of the minutiæ of ritual, is capable of evoking the liveliest interest; while this subject, so transcendently important, excites but languid attention. Why is this? Is there want of belief in this Intermediate existence between Death and the Resurrection? That can hardly be the case, seeing that every Churchman, at all events, professes to accept the Apostles' Creed wherein this truth is enshrined.

The fact is, the current conception of the Intermediate-life is a depressingly vague one. Many suppose that it is impossible for us on earth to know anything of that Life beyond the bare fact that it exists. Some will go farther, and say that because God in His Word has but revealed the *broad principles* which underlie existence there, it is wrong to seek for any clearly defined ideas on the subject. Let one do, as we have done, make fair and honest deductions from the statements of Scripture as to what the environment of that Life

is, and he will be fortunate if he escape the charge of teaching either Popery or Spiritualism, or of drawing upon his imagination.

But it is inconsistent for us, as Churchmen, to object against fair and honest deduction as a means whereby we may arrive at a better perception of truth, seeing that several of the doctrines which we hold most tenaciously—*e.g.*, that of the Trinity and Infant Baptism—have become Articles of our creed by this means.

The result of this vagueness concerning the Intermediate-life; this listless acquiescence in the idea that nothing can be known about it, has been most disastrous to Christian thought and aspiration.

The Unseen-life has been robbed of its interest, and in some cases clothed with associations which are positively distasteful to many minds. Who among us does not shudder at the thought of entering a world which has so often been represented as containing nothing akin to that of which we have any experience here! Take away from our conception of that Life the thought that there will be renewed intercommunion, opportunities of ministration, and scope for the exercise of such qualities as affection and

sympathy, and who would care for such an experience! Make it a sphere, as it has been too often depicted, where no work for God or man is done; where there is no training of the mind to higher knowledge, and the spirit to loftier gracefulness; where intelligent beings, capable of infinite activity, are to loll away an indefinite period in indolent expectation of a blessedness to come upon them, and what man of energy would not recoil from such a lot!

On the other hand, view the Intermediate-life as a place where the incompleted work of developing and perfecting will be carried on to its consummation, and how vastly more attractive and interesting does it become! What a death-blow is dealt to the delusive idea of thousands, that it practically matters little if they are careless about the development of character in the present life, because at the moment of death, if they die in the Christian faith, all will be put right! What a powerful incentive to holiness, if only it be realised that the more earnest our strivings after goodness are here, the higher our position, the less rigorous our disciplining, and the quicker and easier our transition into the condition of "just men made perfect" will be there!

What a palliative of the sadness and disappointment in seeing a promising work of growth in grace apparently interrupted by death!

What a magnificent answer to the yearnings of one whose acquirement of spiritual graces does but make him eager to possess more, and whose mounting on the lower rungs of the ladder of knowledge does but urge him to be the more anxious to climb the higher!

Thus the truth of an existence after Death whose characteristic, as that of all other life, is growth and development, flings around that existence a halo of attractiveness.

It is so to the man of science, inasmuch as he recognises in its constitution the same great underlying principles as he detects everywhere in nature. The Gospel becomes a believable thing to him when he can think that God's laws in the spiritual sphere are the same in kind as those in the physical world. It is so to the man of Divinely cultivated instincts, inasmuch as this truth concerning the Intermediate-life touches him in his profoundest and most tender experiences.

And it is in this last respect, that the truth we

are considering bears, perhaps, most of all upon Christian thought.

We will suppose that you are one who views the cultivation of character, and the attainment of spiritual perfection, as the paramount concern of life. You view the Gospel, not as a mere contrivance whereby men can escape the consequences of wrong-doing, but as a magnificent means by which they can be restored to the moral image of God. Saturated with this thought, you give your mind to the stupendous task. You pray for Divine assistance; you set a watch upon your words and actions; you scrutinise motives and impulses: you prune away habits, pursuits, and surroundings which you consider are antagonistic to the end in view; and you foster all that is likely to advance the same. You are sincere in your religion; your belief is a reality to you. So, you go on, let us say, for twenty years. At the end of that time, something or another causes you to take spiritual stock of yourself. It may have been brought about by reading a book, or by listening to a sermon, or by coming into contact with one exhibiting a beautiful, Christlike character. Your stock-taking is a bitter disappoint-

ment to you. You discover that you are immeasurably short of what you would be. Many spiritual cavities are visible, and innumerable defects of character distress you. Still you pursue the task, while a more bitter disappointment awaits you.

Your health has failed: you are dying; and you know for a certainty that in a few weeks at most your Earth-life will have closed. As an educated man, you know, also, that it is opposed to the order of the universe, and to every known law of God, to imagine that the mere physical act of dying can achieve a moral and spiritual work which years of living have not been able to effect. Moreover, you know that this work can not be done other than slowly and gradually.

Without the thought that that work will be continued in the Intermediate-life, what remains? Only the unavailing regret that, in eternity, you will be less than you might have been, if only the Almighty had seen fit to let you live on earth longer. Will you not loathe a Death, and hate an existence which enforces upon you such a disappointment? Will the adornment of your spirit with a Resurrection-

body, however glorious, compensate for the condition of arrested development in that spirit?

But view the Unseen-life as a life of continued progress until moral and spiritual perfection be reached, and to a dying Christian man, as I have instanced, how pregnant with interest will it become! With St. Paul, he will say, as he steps into that Life, "Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect; but I follow after" (Phil. iii. 12).

Take one other experience which comes to many. God has given you a little child. As a Christian, you are intensely anxious that that child should grow up to a manhood stamped with moral and spiritual excellence. Year after year, finds you earnest in your efforts to impart to him a knowledge of Divine truth. Tendencies to evil are checked; those to good encouraged. The tone of your boy's character is as much a concern to you as your own salvation.

Years roll on. The boy has become a lad. The future looks promising for the realisation of your hopes respecting him. Already the first green blades of a harvest of noble qualities are visible in

him. You thank God for it, and within a year, may be, stand heart-broken beside his coffin. "Oh! God," you cry in your anguish, "that this curtailed life should cut short my golden aspirations in respect to my boy!"

What, I ask, will yield one scrap of comfort at such a time, but the belief that the noble work commenced by you on earth, will be continued in the Unseen-life into which your child has gone! How the interest centred in that Life will be enhanced to you, if it be viewed as the "Upper-school" of your dear one! What a depth of meaning will be contained in the poet's words!

"She is not dead,—the child of our affection,—
But gone unto that School,
Where she no longer needs our poor protection,
And Christ Himself doth rule.
Day after day, we think what she is doing,
In those bright realms of air;
Year after year, her tender steps pursuing,
Behold her grown more fair.

Not as a child shall we again behold her;
For when with raptures wild,

In our embraces we again enfold her,
She will not be a child;
But a fair maiden, in her Father's mansion,
Clothed with celestial grace;
And beautiful with all the soul's expansion
Shall we behold her face."

Can anything, as the truth embodied in our Fourth Deduction, exert so powerful an influence upon Christian thought and experience, not only as making our Creed reasonable, but as investing the existence after Death with interest and charm!

## DEDUCTION V.

**That there is a preaching of Christ's Gospel in the Intermediate-life, which warrants us in hoping that many who do not leave the Earth-life in a state of salvation, may, there, be brought into that condition.**

The view which has obtained currency in the past, and which is still entertained by a large number of Christians, is, that our Lord's work of saving souls is absolutely restricted to the Earth-life; so that, when once the breath has departed from the

body of a person who may not have died with a saving knowledge of the truth, his doom is fixed. No matter however unfavourable his lot in this world may have been; however unfortunate his environment; however small his chances compared with those of others, according to some, it makes no difference. What he will be for all eternity is determined by what he is at the moment of death. And the irresistible logic of this merciless conception is to make Death the hurler of ninety-nine out of every hundred persons into a hopeless perdition.

But, surely, we have a right to expect that a doctrine so subversive of all which we account good, fair and merciful, ought not to command the assent of Christians, unless it can be shown that it is based upon plain and unequivocal statements of Scripture. If that can *not* be shown, then, the Church of to-day has as much right to discard this particular view, as any other false religious idea which may have been held in the past. In the middle ages, the Roman Catholic Church taught that it was pleasing in the sight of God to torture and burn heretics. Later on, the divines of our own Church preached as part of the Gospel a hideous doctrine of Reprobation.

How many, in the Church of England, hold either of those views, to-day?

They were in opposition to the spirit of Christ, and the Word of God, and an age of fuller knowledge and clearer enlightenment has perceived it, and discarded them.

Now, I have no hesitation in saying that there is no more foundation in Scripture for assuming that there can be no salvation *after* death, than there is for the act of torturing heretics, or for teaching Reprobation. I have been challenged, again and again, by those who have differed from me as regards this Fifth Deduction, and when I have asked for the Scriptural proofs upon which an opposite opinion can be based, the following has been the only passage adduced—"In the place where the tree falleth there it shall be" (Eccles. xi. 3).

But, surely, no serious student of Divine truth will place this utterance of a back-sliding man, who at times was all but engulphed in agnosticism, beside the statements of Apostles, whose minds had been specially illuminated at Pentecost. Many of the utterances in Ecclesiastes are completely opposed to the teaching of our Lord, and are

recorded in the Sacred Canon merely to show how perverted the spirit's judgment of things may become when the rein is given to lust and worldly-mindedness.

Furthermore, where is there, in the passage in question, the slightest indication that it has reference to man's *spiritual* condition at all? Do not the verses which precede it show that the writer was referring to *temporal* surroundings, without a thought of eternity? How absurd, then, to raise upon such a weak foundation as this a superstructure of doctrine, which has dwarfed the Gospel of Christ, and caused untold thousands of thoughtful men to turn shudderingly away from Christianity! We have cause to be thankful that the theology of the present day is immeasurably more humane, and bears less of the impress of barbaric thought which infected the Church after the Apostolic age, than the theology of intervening periods. The representation of the Almighty which passed muster for orthodoxy, in the 16th and 17th centuries, would not be tolerated to-day.

But the advance to a clearer and better perception of Divine truth is necessarily slow. It is very

difficult to loosen the tenacious grasp of error on the minds of men. It is no easy thing to efface a misconception which may have grown up with us from childhood, and still less easy to shake the idea that the Church of God, in this age, cannot possibly know more of truth than the Church in past ages; although history bears witness to the contrary.

And so prejudice, and a servile prostration of the mind before the doctrinal pronouncements of ages less enlightened than our own, bar the way for many to a fuller understanding of God's Word.

There is one thing which astonishes me beyond measure, and that is, that any attempt to show from Scripture that the salvation of Christ is more embracive than has been commonly imagined, calls forth a display of the bitterest hostility, and the most cruel misrepresentation. It is one of the puzzles of human nature. Unless experience had taught us otherwise, we should be inclined to think that a Christianity whose chief characteristic is described by St. Paul as being "charity" which "*hopeth all things*," would hail with intense delight the thought of salvation beyond the grave for poor unfortunates who have lived and died without, in some cases, one of the

religious advantages which we enjoy. That the attitude of a man or woman, bearing the name of a pitiful Christ, towards any suggestion of such a hope would be, "Thank God! Tell me, are there any statements in the Bible upon which I can rest such a magnificent belief? How devoutly I wish you may be right in what you say! How far more glorious and attractive will it make the Gospel to me!"

But no; strange as it may be, the tendency of some minds is towards a creed of merciless severity. Preachers have earned the reputation of being able exponents of Scripture, who have attributed to the God, whose name is "Love," conduct sufficient to shock the sensibilities of a Hottentot; while those who, Bible in hand, have ventured to cast doubt upon the miserable restrictions which men have set upon Divine love and mercy, have been loaded with abuse, and branded as enemies of truth.

The dread of arousing antagonism influences the conduct of numbers of the clergy who hold the truth for which we are contending. They maintain an absolute reserve upon the subject. It is not that they would not like to proclaim such a glorious hope. It has exorcised from their own mind many a gloomy

spectre of doubt concerning God's love and goodness. Faith in Christianity, to them, would be impossible without it. But they dare not risk the loss of seat-holders and subscribers, whose religious prejudices would be offended, or face the carping and criticism which would ensue.

If ever the voice of conscience reproaches them for their unfaithfulness to truth, they justify their silence by saying that this particular doctrine is not an essential to salvation; or it is accounted, as in the cases of several I know, an *esoteric* truth, which, while ourselves holding, we are not called upon to impart to others. And so hundreds of good and thoughtful men, who with this knowledge would be kept on the side of Christianity, without it, are left to drift into the ranks of Agnosticism and Materialism.

All I ask of anyone into whose hands this little work may fall, is to read on patiently and thoughtfully to the end, and with open Bible beside him, to "prove all things," and "hold fast that which is good" (1 Thess. v. 21).

Now, in order to minimise the chances of being misrepresented, I shall first of all try to clearly define what I do *not* wish, as well as what I *do* wish to be

conveyed by the above Deduction. Afterwards, I shall do with the Deduction as our Church does to all doctrine, viz., bring it to the test of Holy Scripture. I take my stand on the principles of the Church of England, which places the Word of God above the opinions of divines, whether those opinions be taken collectively as constituting the decrees of councils, or, only as the utterances of individual teachers. Men may err; God cannot.

I. Our Deduction *does not teach Universalism.*

It does not state that *everybody* not brought into a state of salvation in this world will attain that condition in the Intermediate-life. It says that many may. There are not a few earnest-minded clergymen of our communion who believe that no one will ultimately be lost, but that after a period of punishment for sin *all* will attain eternal life.

This belief is the outcome of the mind's recoil from the opposite extreme of Calvinism and the horrifying dogma of Eternal Torment. It is, however, erroneous, and has no better foundation than a philosophic *assumption*. That assumption is, that it is impossible for the soul of man to die. To such as adopt this doctrine of Plato rather than the doctrine of the

Bible; who translate the word "*death*" to mean "unhappy *existence*," and who erect a theory of natural immortality, without so much as a single passage of Scripture to base it upon, Universalism becomes the only logical alternative to an everlasting Hell.

A moment's reflection will show that it must be so. If it be a fact that man is so constituted that his entity—his soul—can never cease to exist, then one of two things must happen—either he must live for ever unhappily, or happily. Those who reject, as blasphemous, the first alternative, have only the second left to them.

Thus we are confronted with a curious instance of a false premiss supporting two completely opposite conclusions.

The false premiss is that man is naturally immortal, that is, that he possesses as part of his constitution the inalienable power of living for ever.

On the other hand, the teaching of Scripture is that man is *not* by nature immortal; that this is the inherent quality of God alone, "who *only* hath immortality" (1 Tim. vi. 16), and that if men "rise to the life immortal" (Collect for Advent Sunday),

they do so by virtue of "the *gift* of God" through Jesus Christ.

The Scripture from Genesis to Revelation is consistent throughout. It represents man dissociated from Christ, "the Life," as standing debarred from taking of the Tree of Life, and eating and *living for ever* (see Gen. iii. 22); connected with Him, as blessed, and having "right to the Tree of Life," and, consequently, capable of living for ever (see Rev. xxii. 14).

Clearly these passages need a little theological jugglery before they can be made to fit in with the theory that man, except so far as concerns his body, is incapable of dying.

Universalism, then, built up as it is upon a wrong premiss, is shown to be weak when an appeal is made to Scripture. A few out of a very large number of passages will suffice to prove this.

Our Lord, in referring to Judas, said, "Good were it for that man if he had never been born" (Mark xiv. 21). How can this statement be true if the Universalist be right? However awful the doom of Judas may be, beyond it would stretch an eternity

of blessedness. *Then* it would be good for him that he had been born.

On another occasion Christ said, "He that shall blaspheme against the Holy Ghost *hath never* forgiveness" (Mark iii. 29). How, we ask, can this statement be true if such an one eventually obtain eternal happiness?

St. John the Baptist said, "He that believeth not the Son *shall not see* life" (John iii. 36); while the Apostolic writers threaten impenitent sinners with "everlasting *destruction*" (2 Thess. i. 9), and "death *unto death*" (2 Cor. ii. 16).

Either such passages are fatal to the idea that *all* will ultimately attain everlasting bliss, or no dependence whatever can be placed upon language.

Such considerations, therefore, make our position one of hostility to the theory of Universalism.

II. Our Deduction *does not deny that there will be a Hell for the finally impenitent.*

The utterances of God's Word on this point are plain and unequivocal. The Old and New Testament alike proclaim that, at the Judgment, some will pass into a place or condition of punishment for sin. This punishment is expressed in the Greek New

Testament by the word "Gehenna," and in the English by "Hell."

Closely associated with this condition of Hell, or punishment, but quite distinct from it, is a subsequent experience, called in the Bible "the *Second Death*."

This latter is the outcome of the former, and bears the same relation to it as bodily dissolution does to mortal physical suffering.

Now, theology in the past has made the huge mistake of confounding the two things. "Hell" and "the Second Death" have been treated as interchangeable terms. This is as illogical as to make no distinction between capital punishment and the imprisonment which precedes it.

The result has been as was to be expected. Hell has been viewed as a condition of *everlasting conscious suffering*, because the word "death" has been misunderstood and made to mean *perpetual existence*. Our contention is that a true conception of Hell is only possible when "the Second Death" is recognised as being a something distinct from Hell, and when, moreover, flinging aside preconceptions, we attach a Scriptural meaning to the word "death."

What is it possible to gather from the Bible

concerning the destiny of man? That, whatever may be the possibilities of salvation either in this life, or in the Intermediate-life, man's condition will be unalterably fixed *at the Judgment Day*.

*Then*, as a being perfected in body, soul and spirit, he will pass into the enjoyment of everlasting life, or as one unredeemed, into a condition of just punishment for sin (Hell), and thence into the Second Death. Life and Death, throughout the Sacred Canon, are placed in juxtaposition. The one is the antithesis of the other.

This latter, "the Second Death," is that to which Scripture points as being the final issue of impenitence and dissociation from Christ. It tells us that there is a Hell, but also a something beyond. That the former is an experience through which unredeemed men will pass on their way to the latter. That the outlook for a lost soul beyond the Judgment, and beyond the Hell which shall follow that Judgment, is *Death*. Thus, "The wages of sin is *death*" (Rom. vi. 23), "Sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth *death*" (James i. 15), "The Second *Death*" (Rev. ii. 11; xx. 6 and 14), and a multitude of like passages.

Let us consider, then, this word "death" as

describing the lot of the finally impenitent. What sense are we to attach to it? Surely, not such as shall be contrary to the idea which it conjured up in the minds of those to whom it was originally addressed. To whatever extent the Church's coquetting with Platonic philosophy may have subsequently infused *another* meaning into it, it is quite certain that to persons living in Apostolic times it denoted *cessation of life*. Even where it is used in a secondary sense, *e.g.*, "*dead* in trespasses and sins" (Eph. ii. 1), the underlying signification is in no way reversed. In such a case it defines a condition whose *tendency is towards extinction of being*.

When we speak of a person who has swallowed a dose of poison as a "*dead* man," we simply view him in anticipation of what will ensue. We do not import another meaning into the word "dead." Used in this way, the term still conveys the thought of cessation of life. No one, except a theologian, would dream of interpreting "death" to mean *an everlasting prolongation of existence*.

And yet this has been done at the bidding of a theology which starts upon a false premiss. To those who hold, in opposition to Scripture, the view that

the soul of itself, and apart from Christ, is inherently immortal, the only really consistent belief, however blasphemous and inconceivable it may be, is that the lost will continue their existence in a Hell of everlasting wretchedness. They are lost souls and they cannot die.

However hideously the thought misrepresents God, by making Him more cruel and remorseless than the vilest monster ever pictured by perverted imaginations; however impossible to reconcile the everlasting *perpetuation* of evil with Christ's avowed purpose of "*destroying* the works of the devil" (1 John iii. 8); and however potent a cause it has been of driving thousands of thoughtful minds into the cheerless midnight of unbelief—this barbarous dogma of Eternal Torment is the only one we can consistently adopt if we start with the assumption that man is naturally immortal.

And a theology built up upon this has no alternative but to twist the word "*death*" until it contradicts itself, and means the opposite—*never-ending life;* and to drop the word "*second*" as a misleading redundancy.

The teaching of the Bible, from beginning to end, is that there will be a Hell in which the unrepentant

will be punished in exact proportion to their wrong doing; those who have sinned greatly being "beaten with many stripes;" those who have sinned less, with "few stripes" (see Luke xii. 47, 48). That following this Hell will be another and final experience,—"the Second Death,"—in which those unconnected with Christ, "the Life," will *pass out of existence*. The disease of sin unchecked and uncured by the Great Physician will have done, as all unchecked disease does; it will have worked out its course to dissolution. The man will die, body and soul, in that Second Death, because he will be incapable of living. He has not come to Christ that he "might have life" (John v. 40).

No words could be more emphatic than those of our Lord on this point. "Fear not them which kill the body but are not able to kill the soul; but rather fear Him which is able *to destroy both soul and body* in Hell" (Matt. x. 28).

The two deaths are here referred to: the first that of the body; the second that of the resurrected body, and soul. In speaking of the second, our Lord uses the strongest word He can find to express *cessation of being*, viz., "destroy," (Greek, ἀπολεσαι) a word

employed by writers of that age to denote *annihilation*. How is it possible to read into this expression the idea of *everlasting preservation* of body and soul?

Then again, the prefixing of the adjective "second" to the term "Second Death" is altogether misleading, unless "death" implies extinction of life. We understand it to mean that, when we use it in connection with bodily dissolution.

A second of anything presupposes a likeness in kind to a first. If second death means unending continuation of life, then the Bible is sadly perplexing in calling it "death," and still more so in terming it the "second death." It would not be death at all, but life characterised by *deathlessness*.

If such violence was done to language by the sacred writers, certainly they ought to have given us a foot-note to that effect. That they did not do so, is evidence that they intended us to take the word "death" in its universally accepted sense.

One other most important consideration must not be omitted in support of what we have advanced above. It is this—that all the terms used in the Old and New Testament to describe the lot of the finally impenitent, after the just punishment for sin has been

endured in Hell, are terms which convey the idea of *ending*.

So far from sanctioning the teaching that wicked men are immortal, and will be preserved throughout all eternity in shocking depravity of soul and unutterable agony of body, the Scripture seems to ransack language in order to find words to describe their condition as that of *terminableness and destruction*.

Speaking of such, the Bible says that they shall be "like the chaff which the wind driveth away" (Ps. i. 4); shall "come to an end" (Ps. vii. 9); shall "perish" (Ps. xxxvii. 20); "consume into smoke," "consume away" (same verse); "be destroyed" (v. 38); "be cut off" (v. 38); be "like the beasts that perish" (Ps. xlix. 20); "be *destroyed* for ever" (Ps. xcii. 7); be "no more" (Prov. x. 25); be "*burnt up* with unquenchable fire" (Matt. iv. 12); "shall not see life" (John iii. 16); "shall be punished with everlasting *destruction*" (2 Thess. i. 9): shall "*lose* his own soul" (Matt. xvi. 26); "*lose* his life" (Luke ix. 24); "*lose* himself" (v. 25).

These are but a very few out of a vast number of like passages, and how they can be reconciled with a

theory of the everlasting preservation of the wicked in Hell I am at a loss to understand.

They negative the idea that the lost can never die, and force home the conviction that God means what He says when He proclaims that "the wages of sin is *death*," and not an everlasting *life* of wretchedness and suffering. The "everlasting fire" of judgment on sin will not be a fire which will *preserve* a sinner in his sin, but which will *consume* him. It will be the everlasting monument against sin when the sinner and sin shall be no more.

Thus, then, while we discard the doctrine of Eternal Torment, because it is unscriptural and fiendish, we do not deny that there will be a Hell; awful indeed for some; less so for others, according as men sin against their knowledge of good. And this truth is made believable by the thought that beyond it, when "the uttermost farthing" shall have been paid (Matt. v. 26), will be the merciful silence and oblivion of "the Second Death" that there will be, hereafter, a day when of Hell itself, as of sorrow, crying and pain, it shall be said, "The former things are passed away" (Rev. xxi. 4).

This digression having been necessary in order to

vindicate our fifth Deduction from the possible charge of favouring Universalism, or of involving the denial of a future condition of punishment for the impenitent, we return to the main line of argument. "That there is a preaching of Christ's Gospel in the Intermediate-life, which warrants us in hoping that many who do not leave the Earth-life in a state of salvation may *there* be brought into that condition."

No one abreast with the religious thought of the day, will deny that this truth is silently, but surely, forcing itself upon the minds of men of all schools of thought in the Church. To many it has come as a gleam of cheering sunshine to scare away the dark shadows lurking in the theology of the past.

The faith of thoughtful men has been assailed and threatened by ugly doubts and questionings about God and God's goodness, and the recognition of this truth has answered their doubts and questionings, and kept them to their Christian moorings, and so saved them from drifting out upon the troubled sea of unbelief. To such it has seemed little short of a fresh revelation from God. And yet it is no new truth. It is no modern addition to the glorious Gospel of our

Lord Jesus Christ. It is an old truth; just as old as the Gospel itself. It is so much a part of that Gospel, that, were it shown to be otherwise, for many that Gospel would cease to be a Gospel at all. It is no hazy speculation engendered by the gentler spirit and more sympathetic character of this nineteenth century. It dates from an epoch which is the starting-point of all that makes us in spirit and character better than our forefathers. It is a truth which lies crystallised in the words of our Lord and His Apostles. But it has been lost sight of, or nearly so, by the Church for centuries. This truth has its roots in the eternal principles of love, compassion and mercy, and it can only appeal to the minds of men who are under the sway of those principles.

It has been lost sight of, because men have lacked the moral disposition necessary for its perception. Apostolic men perceived it, because the Apostolic Church was permeated with the spirit of love and mercy. The Church of later ages failed to perceive it, for the reason that her history has been stained by deeds of cruelty and bloodshed, and disfigured by narrowness and intolerance. The mental atmosphere of men so unloving as to sanction the Inquisition, and

so exclusive as to endorse Calvinism, was such that by no possibility could the perception of this truth be kept alive. Happily, the truth remained in spite of man's failure to perceive it. Happily, the Church of Christ, to-day, is exhibiting more of the spirit of her Master than she has done for fifteen hundred years; and, as a consequence, this magnificent truth so long obscured is becoming recognised.

*The truth of our fifth Deduction established by two considerations.*

I. God's attitude toward the human race, as portrayed by the writers of Scripture, makes it a *necessity* that there should be a preaching of the Gospel in the Intermediate-life.

When God devised the scheme of Redemption, He contemplated humanity *as a whole*.

It was no expedient whereby a certain number of the human race could be brought within the pale of the possibility of salvation, and the remainder left outside. That, alas! has been taught by men who have looked at the word "election" through the smoky glass of Calvinism. It by no means follows that because God chooses to "elect" some to Christian privileges in this Earth-life, as a means of

propagating His truth, that others, outside that election, are beyond the chance of salvation. The Jews were God's elect people, and the Gentiles were not; but the door of the Kingdom of Heaven was not barred against the latter on that account.

When God became incarnate, it became *possible* for the entire human race to be saved. He placed the attainment of everlasting life within the reach of every human creature who had, or would come into existence. No one, whatever his environment, is outside God's love.

Of no person is it true that God does not wish him to be saved.

The Scripture is very emphatic on this point. "God so loved *the world* that He gave His only begotten Son" (John iii. 16); "God sent not His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that *the world* through Him might be saved" (v. 17); "God was in Christ reconciling *the world* unto Himself" (2 Cor. v. 19); "God also hath highly exalted Him, and given Him a name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus *every knee* should bow" (Phil. ii. 10); "That in the dispensation of the fulness of times, He (God) might gather together in one *all*

*things* in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth" (Eph. i. 10); "Having made peace through the blood of His Cross by Him to reconcile *all things* unto Himself" (Col. i. 20); "The Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of *the world*" (1 John iv. 14); "This is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour, who will have *all men* to be saved and to come unto the knowledge of the truth" (1 Tim. ii. 4).

These passages, out of a great many more, surely prove two points:—

(*a*) That the plan of salvation was devised with no thought of God's exclusion from it of any member of the human race.

(*b*) That whoever may lose everlasting life will do so in opposition to God's wish.

But the above representation of God is untrue in the face of the millions who leave the Earth-life without so much as hearing the Gospel, if there be no preaching of that Gospel in the Intermediate-life.

It is quite certain that the Almighty has placed it in the power of but a few, comparatively, to savingly know Christ, this side of the grave. If He wills that

*all men* should be saved, all, at least, will be offered that salvation, and if the offer has not been made in the Earth-life, it must be in the Unseen-life, unless we are prepared to say that the sacred writers have overstated God's love and wishes toward our race. Hence the truthfulness of the Bible itself is bound up with the truth contained in this fifth Deduction.

II. The other consideration is, that the *office* and *position* assigned to our Lord by the writers of Scripture, makes it a *necessity*, also, that there should be this preaching of the Gospel in the Intermediate-life.

He is the Saviour for the entire human race. Let me be clearly understood. I do not mean to say that every person will be saved; but that every person may, if he will, be saved. No lost soul will ever be able to say, "I am lost, because Christ did not die for *me*."

How is our Lord represented in Holy Scripture? As "the Saviour of *all men*, especially of those that believe" (1 Tim. iv. 10); "a ransom *for all*, to be testified in due time" (1 Tim. ii. 6); "the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the *whole world*" (1 John ii. 2); "the Lamb

of God which taketh away the sin of *the world*" (John i. 29).

Further, in speaking of Himself, Christ said, "The bread that I will give is My flesh, which I will give for the life of *the world*" (John vi. 5); "I, if I be lifted up from the earth will draw *all men* unto Me" (John xii. 32); while His last words spoken on earth were, "Go ye into *all the world*, and preach the Gospel to *every creature*" (Mark xvi. 15).

Clearly, then, Christ cannot be "the Saviour of *all* men," unless all men be vouchsafed, either here, or hereafter, a fair chance of embracing the benefits which He offers. If only one were to perish, because the knowledge of salvation through Jesus had been withheld, then His claim to be "the propitiation for the sins of the *whole world*" must be relinquished.

And yet untold millions die without so much as even hearing Christ's name. If there be no preaching of Him in the Unseen-life, there can be no possibility of salvation for such as these; and the sacred writers were guilty of exaggeration, when they assigned to Christ the position of "the Saviour of *all* men."

Hence we see that the truthfulness of the writers

of the New Testament, and of Christ Himself, is bound up with the truth contained in this fifth Deduction.

In order that we may the better realise the weightiness of these two foregoing conclusions, and, moreover, show that we have not exaggerated in saying that a preaching of the Gospel in Hades is a *necessity*, if God's attitude, and Christ's position towards man be such as the Bible describes, let us honestly consider *the position of the human race in past ages, and now, as to its chances of salvation.*

I will premise the following, which no Christian reader, in whatever other respect he may differ from me, will refuse to grant.

(*a*) That no one can attain salvation apart from a knowledge of God, and of His love and mercy in Christ. Our Lord's words are very decisive on this point. "This is life eternal, that they may *know* Thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom Thou hast sent" (John xvii. 3).

(*b*) That this knowledge cannot be obtained unless communicated to us. Christ, in order to communicate it, founded a Church, and commissioned His followers to "go into all the world and preach" (Mark xvi. 15).

(*c*) That those who have this knowledge can be in a state of salvation, while those who do not possess it can not be.

(*d*) That God loves the world, and is "not willing that any should perish" (2 Peter iii. 9).

Now, suppose that an inhabitant of one of the most distant planets were to be transported to this earth. He is told, we will imagine, about man's fall, and those truths concerning his recovery which I have just enumerated; but he is also told that there is no possibility of salvation for man, if he be not brought into that condition this side of the grave; that though man will continue his existence in an Intermediate-life, there will be no preaching of the Gospel there.

What, think you, would that visitor count on finding, as he looked around upon men and their prospects of salvation? He would certainly expect from what had been said about God's love, and Christ's office, that to every human creature on this earth the offer of salvation *had been*, or *was being* made.

If it were hinted to him that the Church had so badly carried out the command of her Divine Master, that, instead of millions, there were only thousands of

missionaries, that would only lead him to be on the look-out for angels, instead of men, as preachers in the out-of-the-way places of the earth. It would never strike him that God would let a magnificent work of love and mercy be spoilt because men were not energetic enough. Were he told that even *one* man had lost eternal life because he had been so circumstanced as to die before knowing anything about it, his reply to his informer would be that he must be mistaken; it could not be so; that if there be no preaching in the next life, the man must have been offered salvation in this, since God "will have *all* men to be saved."

If he were told that the great bulk of mankind had lost eternal life because their earthly environment was such as to make it, practically, impossible for them to be Christians, then I think he would open his eyes in amazement, and go back to his sphere, and tell his brother Intelligences that he had found the theologians of earth the most illogical beings in existence; that in one breath they affirm that God loves *the world*, and in the next breath deny it, by saying that His love cannot exercise itself outside a miserable little limit which *they*, not *He*, has affixed.

This is not a far-fetched supposition. If men's minds had not become warped by long familiarity with a teaching essentially narrow and pitiless, it would be impossible for any thoughtful person, with an open Bible before him, to conceive the idea that the eternal destiny of *all* is irreversibly fixed at the moment of death. Those who hold such an opinion do not realise what it involves.

Think of the teeming myriads of human beings who, from the remote centuries to the present time, have lived and died. The number is inconceivable.

It is estimated that no less than thirty-six millions of people die every year. Add to the death-rate of one year that of thousands of years. The number of leaves on every tree in the world does not represent the sum total.

Think, as regards this vast aggregate, that the bulk has been outside the little area of Christian privileges; that, certainly, not more than one in every ten thousand has heard of God's love and Christ's salvation; and that, having died in this ignorance, these persons are beyond the range of redemption. How awful! How inexpressibly

saddening! What an unsatisfactory ending for a scheme of mercy which was devised in contemplation of our race *as a whole*, and announced by the Saviour Himself as such!

Import into the consideration, moreover, the fact that every one of these unfortunate beings stands as much in need of being saved as we do; and they are as capable of being "children of light" as we are. That many of them, indeed, have done deeds of heroism and exhibited traits of character which may well put us Christians to the blush, and make us ask whether they are not more fit for eternal life than we are.

Oh! ye makers and supporters of a theology, which is stamped with the name of Christ, but does not reflect His spirit, how can ye think that a world which God loves, and for which Christ died, must perish (except in so far as concerns a few), because it does not possess that which God, in this life, has never given it a chance of having!

And yet it must be so, if there be no preaching of the Gospel in the Intermediate-life.

Will ye not read into the words of the Church's greatest theologian, St. Paul, what ye have hitherto

failed to note: that Christ, the "Ransom for *all, is to be testified in due time*" (1 Tim. ii. 6), and that for the greater proportion of the human race, that "due time" must be the Intermediate-life!

But again, think of the earthly environment of hundreds of thousands who have lived, and are living, in what we call Christian countries. Will any one venture to say, if the possibility of salvation beyond the grave be denied, that God has dealt either lovingly, or even fairly, with *all* whose lot has been cast, for example, in Christian Europe, or favoured England?

Is it possible, in denying our position, of many such, to say, "God loves them; Christ died to save them"? I think not.

Take a case in point. It is but a sample of many of which I have had experience during a four years' ministry in the East of London.

Here is a fellow creature, born in a garret, in a dismal, wretched slum. He is the outcome of drink, that is to say, he would never have been begotten, but that the immoral passions of his parents had been inflamed by drunkenness. He was an interloper, a burden, and a disgrace, and he

was made to feel it. Unloved, uncared for, left to shift for himself, he gravitated to the gutter, and never so much as heard the name of God or Christ, except on the ears of profanity.

Years passed over his head. The child of neglect became the boy of fifteen, who picked up a miserable pittance by carrying parcels in the streets. He knew nothing about salvation. Nobody had told him of it. The doors of the Sunday School were closed against him. He was too ragged and disreputable. Once, years ago, on a bitter cold night, the warm lights of a church had attracted him. He had ventured to peep inside the porch, but a gorgeous beadle had made him beat a quick retreat. He had never been since. He had come to the conclusion that churches were not for "the likes of him."

A few more years glided away. It was winter-time, and a murky fog enwrapped everything in gloom. He was half-frozen, hungry, wretched. He stepped off the curb-stone to cross the road.

There was a shout; a cry of horror from the bystanders. The wheel of a heavily-laden waggon had crushed him into eternity.

Dare we, as we bend over the poor, disfigured

wreck of humanity, and think of our cushioned pew and Christian privileges, say that there ought *not* to be a preaching of the Gospel to him in the Unseen-Life? If we can say it, is our Christianity anything more than a lifeless creed, without the spirit of Christ?

Again, there are numbers living in lands where Christ is preached, whose status is not that of the outcast, to whom God's truth has never really been presented.

Take the case of the uneducated poor in many country districts, a hundred years ago. Unable to read; untrained for thinking; doomed to listen to dull, prosy sermons, which converted pews into sleeping boxes; and accustomed, from infancy, to see the dust of neglect and dreariness lie thick on everything connected with religion, what chance was there for the poor farm-labourer of finding God and eternal life? Very little, surely!

Suppose he died as he had lived—insensible to Divine realities, because they had never been brought home to his consciousness—what then? Ask the one who presumes to say to God's Love, "Hitherto shalt thou come; but no further." You know the

terrible answer. Yes; but which is the more in harmony with Divine Love—that, in the Intermediate-Life, an earnest preacher should show that man the truth, as it had never before been shown him, or that God should let him perish for lack of that truth, the victim of an apathetic Church?

Again, at a higher social level than that of the uneducated agriculturalist, there have been other persons in Christian lands to whom God's truth has also never really been presented. I am referring to persons of education and thought, who, good and pure in their life, have felt it to be a paramount duty not to dismiss the question of religion without enquiry and investigation. Pure in heart they have been, so far as moral disposition is concerned, in a favourable condition for perceiving God and His truth.

They have turned for enlightenment to the recognized leaders of religious thought. They have gone, *e.g.*, to the Calvinist, and what has he told them? From a terminology in which the expressions "Divine sovereignty," "Election," and "Reprobation" have figured, he has gathered three things:—that God is a Being who arbitrarily selects a few upon

whom to confer the blessing of eternal life; that He heartlessly abandons the rest to drift into everlasting torment; and in regard to the latter, that He brings them into existence to compass that end.

The seeker after God is disappointed. The God he wanted to find is shown to be infinitely worse than himself. Christianity is not what he had hoped it might be. He cannot be mistaken; he has the word of Christian teachers themselves.

And so he cannot, unless he strangle his conception of goodness, be a Christian. He will go on trying to be noble and good without subscribing to such a terrible creed. He stands aloof from the Christ of so-called orthodoxy.

At last he dies, and some, if they could, would write over his tomb the word "Lost."

Stay! That man might have been a lover of God, and a sincere believer in the Lord Jesus Christ, whose beautiful character he reflected, perhaps, better than we do, had his teachers been less infected with barbaric thought. Will you say that Christ, so misrepresented and maligned, who said He would leave the ninety and nine sheep and go after the one who has gone astray, will make no effort hereafter

to sweep away the misconception from that man's mind ?

And yet you must say that if you deny a preaching in the Intermediate-life.

Thus are we driven to the conclusion that the world has been, and is, so circumstanced in regard to God's design of salvation as to make a preaching of the Gospel in the Intermediate-life a *necessity*.

If this be not conceded, then we have no alternative but to view the statements of the Bible respecting God's love, and Christ's office, as the exaggerated utterances of men carried over the confines of truthfulness by their too kindly feelings.

Whether this latter be compatible with a belief in Divine Inspiration, I leave my reader to decide.

*The direct statements of Scripture in establishment of our fifth Deduction.*

There may be some who say that the passages to which we have appealed in support of our argument, go no further than to show the *likelihood* of there being a preaching of the Gospel in the Unseen-life. They do not positively state that such actually is the case. Is there no *direct* statement in the Bible,

sufficiently plain and unequivocal, to set the question completely at rest? Has no inspired writer been permitted to lift the veil which shrouds the Hereafter, so that we may be quite sure that our glorious hope is a certainty?

Yes. St. Peter has done so. I must refer to his words again, although I have had occasion already to quote them in connection with Proposition III.

The passages are:—1 Peter iii. 18-20. "Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit; by which (Greek, "*in* which") also He went and preached unto the spirits in prison (Greek, "in *keeping*"); which sometime were disobedient, when once the long-suffering of God waited in the days of Noah." And, in close connection with this passage, 1 Peter iv. 6. "For this cause was the Gospel preached also to them that are dead, that they might be judged according to men in the flesh, but live according to God in the spirit."

The first of these two passages is a statement of facts. As much so as the words which declare that Christ discoursed to a multitude on a mountain-

side, or by the Lake of Galilee, or that St. Paul addressed the men of Athens on Mars' Hill. There is need to insist upon this, because an attempt has been made to denude this passage of its significance by making "the spirits in prison" merely to mean persons on this earth who are living in the bonds of sin.

What are the real facts presented here?

That, ages ago, a world of disobedient men and women, insensible to the claims of righteousness, were swept from out the Earth-Life by the terrible waters of the Flood; and passed, unsaved, into the Intermediate-Life. There, for centuries, they remained "in keeping;" and the words—"which *sometime* were disobedient"—would seem to imply that the awful judgment which had befallen them, had not been without the effect of producing in them the spirit of obedience.

As with Dives in Hades, the discipline of the Unseen-World had developed new and better traits of character.

In due time, "the Saviour of all men," and, consequently, the One capable of being *their* Saviour, was crucified on Calvary, and His Spirit, as do the

spirits of all, passed at the moment of death into the Unseen-World. In that Spirit, severed awhile from His lifeless Body, Jesus preached to these very beings who had preceded Him to that World.

*What* He preached, and *for what reason* He preached, is told us in the second of the passages.

Christ preached the glad tidings of salvation to them. "For for this cause was the *Gospel* preached also to them that are dead."

The word "dead," as I have shown in another place, could only refer to the Antediluvians' *bodily* condition; since there would be no sense in preaching to beings who had passed out of existence.

Christ's *object* in preaching was, first, that these persons, at the Day of Judgment, might stand on the same footing as those to whom salvation by Christ is offered during the Earth-life—"that they might be judged according to men in the flesh," *i.e.*, judged by the *same rule* as others more favourably circumstanced, viz., by the Gospel message itself.

The question upon which the Judgment of mankind will turn, is not whether they have been sinners, but whether they have turned to Christ for pardon

and sanctification. This implies that all men must, at least, be told of the Christ to Whom they must turn. Professor Godet says, "No human spirit reaches the crucial point of its probation, until it has come into contact with the claims of the Lord Jesus Christ for acception or rejection."

These old-world sinners, however great their wickedness, had never rejected Christ in the sense in which we, to whom He has been preached, may reject Him. Hence, for them to be judged hereafter by the same standard as that by which we and all men will be judged, it was necessary that there should be vouchsafed to them the same opportunity of salvation as has been granted to us.

To imagine otherwise would be to impute unfairness to the Judge of all the earth.

The other object for which Christ preached to these disembodied beings in the Intermediate-life, was that they might "live according to God in the spirit."

In the *flesh*, they had not done so. But the waters which had swept them into destruction, as far as their bodies were concerned, had not launched them into a condition of utter hopelessness.

They had brought upon themselves a terrible judgment; they had, by their wickedness, shaped around them a character which had to be unshaped and re-moulded in the Unseen-World. But they had not, at the moment of death, turned their back upon the *all* that Divine Love and Pity could offer. There was still a Jesus Who might touch a nature which had been insensible to the claims of the mere moral law. There was still the principle of Divine Love in the universe, which might soften a heart which had not known God as we know Him.

The Almighty might slay them, as He afterwards slew "Sihon, king of the Amorites, and Og, the king of Bashan," in order to vindicate His eternal law of righteousness; but behind the slaying lay the fact, repeated twenty-six times in one psalm (Psalm cxxxvi.), that "His *mercy* endureth for ever."

And it was under the promptings of this mercy that the Lord Jesus Christ preached the Gospel to these men and women; that in the spirit-life, they might "live according to God," and gain what God would have all gain—everlasting life and blessedness.

There have been untold millions who have not

known Christ in this life, who have never sunk in degradation so low as these Antediluvians had sunk. These latter had the claims of righteousness forced upon them by the earnest preaching and consistent conduct of Noah. Millions who have departed this life unsaved, have never had a like advantage.

Will there be no preaching to such in the Intermediate-life? If not, why not? Why this extension of mercy to some, and the denial of it to others who deserve it far more than they did? Will all the sophistries which a teaching engendered of human narrowness can advance, make it right or fair that the Almighty should act thus? Surely not. If the Bible be true, Christ is "the same, yesterday, and to-day, and for ever." Consequently, He must have the same yearning concern for unsaved souls as He had when His human Body hung stiffening in death. If, *then*, when human wickedness had assumed its most hideous form, He could go after lost sheep of a race that had but freshly heaped upon Him such indignity and wrong, will He not do so to-day? Can we imagine that God in His judgment of mankind, has grown less fair, and Christ less loving, pitiful, and solicitous?

And so, what St. Peter has revealed impels us to the belief that for everyone, whose environment in this Earth-life has placed him in a disadvantageous position in respect to God's salvation, there will be a preaching of Christ in the Unseen-life.

## The bearing of this Deduction upon our Christian thought and experience.

I. *It, alone, enables a thoughtful Christian to maintain an attitude of fearlessness in the face of an attack upon Christianity.*

We who hold the truth contained in this Deduction, dread no assault upon our religion from whatever quarter it may come. No foe can involve us in a moral entanglement from which we cannot extricate ourselves. He may bring forth his most powerful weapons from the armoury of unbelief, but we can blunt their edge and turn them against himself. Difficulties which he can adduce, and which threaten to undermine Faith, disappear in the light of this truth. We have an effective answer to the strongest objections against Christianity, viz., those which deal with its *moral* aspects.

But it is not so in the case of those who exclude

a magnificent hope by the denial of a preaching of Christ's Gospel in the Intermediate-life.

These, in a contest with unbelief, are in a pitiable plight. There is many a breach through which the foeman may enter the citadel of their faith; many a faulty link in the armour which makes it exceedingly unwise to stand face to face with him. It were better for them not to risk an encounter. They are sure to be worsted. They cannot bolster up a creed which violates principles to which all right-thinking men do homage. Their only chance of making themselves religiously comfortable is to close the doors and windows of their mind against the wind of hostile criticism, and to forget that it is wildly beating against the theological fabric within which they have ensconced themselves.

And this, indeed, is what many sincere Christian people do. They have a positive dread as to what may happen to their faith, should they be subjected to the ordeal of listening to what may be said against it. To them, an unbeliever is a being to be dreaded, because their theology furnishes no answer to his arguments. It never seems to strike them that a Creed upon which hopes for eternity are rested, must

be a poor sort of thing not to be able to hold its own against those who can give sound reasons for rejecting it. And so, those of whom we are speaking, if they be educated and thoughtful, feel the disadvantage under which they labour, and wisely, from their standpoint, decline to enter into discussion with those who differ from them.

This is no overstatement. It is much to be regretted in the interests of Divine truth. And yet, if it be accounted an essential for Christianity, to believe that everything in regard to man is determined at the moment of death, and that there is no preaching of the Gospel in the Unseen-Life, it were better for one holding this view not to discuss it, nor to think about it. If he do, he will have to relinquish his faith in Christianity. It is a choice between strangling the moral instincts, or re-modelling the views concerning Christ's Gospel.

Confront a believer in the theology which we are opposing with one who rejects Christianity.

The latter, we will suppose, is shrewd enough to detect the weak points in his opponent's creed at which he is most likely to score an advantage. What is the line upon which he will advance to the attack?

He will, first, ask the Christian whether he admits that God is infinitely good, merciful, and just; and really concerned in the welfare and salvation of His creature, man. The answer, of course, will be "Yes." His next question will be, "How is it, then, that nine-tenths of our race are permitted to perish because God has suffered them to be born, and to live, under circumstances where there has not been the ghost of a chance of their being saved? Can this disastrous handicapping of the bulk of humanity, by a God Who could, if He liked, order it otherwise, be compatible with conduct which is either good, considerate, or fair?"

What satisfactory answer can the Christian who denies a preaching of the Gospel in the Unseen-Life, give to this? None whatever. He may throw dust into the eyes of his own moral perception by propounding a theory of "Divine sovereignty" which, according to him, entitles God to do as He will with His unfortunate creatures; but he knows full well that on the grounds of righteousness and fairness, his adversary has obtained the better of the argument. He leaves the discussion with the uncomfortable sensation that all he was able to say in defence of his

theory has but confirmed the unbeliever in his doubt.

Not so is it with us. Confront us with the same opponent. Let him advance the same argument, and we have an answer at hand which can silence all his imputations upon the Almighty's goodness, mercy, and fair-dealing.

Thus, do we become fearless in presence of unbelief. And only thus.

II. *Our Deduction, alone, enables us to reconcile many of the acts of God's Providence with the thought of His goodness.*

No Christian will deny that many things befall mankind which, being altogether beyond our control, must be viewed either as having been appointed by God, or, at least, permitted by Him. These occurrences we term "Divine Providence."

Nor is the term misapplied, although they be seen to be the result of natural laws, since God made the laws; provides that they shall work out their ends; and, moreover, could, did He so wish, suspend them in their operations.

Clearly, then, every event beyond the control of man must be assigned to Him. We recognise this

when we speak of "visitations of God." We open our newspapers and read of appalling disasters. A sudden squall strikes a vessel under full sail, and capsizing it, buries, within a few moments, three or four hundred sailor-lads in a watery grave. A thunder-storm bursts over farm-labourers working in the fields, or upon little children gathering wild flowers, and in an instant the lightning has scorched one or more of them into eternity. A huge tidal-wave, a cyclone, an earthquake, a subsidence of land, without warning, hurries thousands into destruction.

To the one whose belief requires that the horizon of hope should be bounded by the grave, these things are unutterably perplexing. He shudders at the bare idea of thinking that God is not loving and kind to all His creatures. But how can he reconcile such acts of Providence with the attributes which he ascribes to Him?

He turns to his Bible, but only reading into its utterances his own preconceptions, he finds nothing there which will scare away the haunting spectre of doubt.

Nay, if following the example of the enemies of Christianity, he reads of certain events recorded in

the Old Testament, without letting the light which streams from the inspired words of St. Peter fall upon them, his doubts are likely to become intensified. When, for example, the flood swept sinful men and women into destruction, numbers of little children and infants perished with them. When the earth "opened her mouth and swallowed up" Korah, Dathan and Abiram, all that appertained unto them, "their wives and their sons and their little children," "went down quick into the pit" with them.

How will one who denies the truth for which we are contending, reconcile these facts with the goodness, mercy, or justice of God? Will not the awful conviction be forced upon him, that however conspicuous these Divine attributes may be in other dealings of God, here, at least, they cannot be traced? How unloving, how unfair, to deprive the unoffending of the chances of salvation because others have sinned! Upon such narratives as these, and upon many events which happen around us, it is impossible to allow the mind to dwell, without either admitting the truth of our Deduction, or of being conscious that we are holding a creed against which our reason and instincts rebel.

Many good persons do hold such a creed, and remain Christians; but it is only accomplished by a persistent drugging of the intellect into a condition of moral insensibility.

I do not mean, as regards their own personal life and conduct, that they are insensible to moral instincts; but it is so, as far as their perception of morality in God is concerned. They themselves may be compassionate and just, and yet ascribe to Infinite Love a line of conduct which would be a disgrace to an Oriental despot.

Such persons present a curious phenomenon. In character, they are superior to their creed; and in practice, better than the God they imagine.

What a striking contrast there is between the mental attitude of those to whom we have referred, and that of ourselves who believe in a preaching of the Gospel in the Intermediate-Life. The Providences of God may sadden us, and sober us into becoming more earnest men; they cannot unsteady our faith in His mercy and justice. We have a something which can touch the direst catastrophe, and transmute it into a deed of goodness and blessing.

Take, for instance, the case of the foundering of the training-ship "Eurydice." How terrible the loss of those poor sailor lads!

Yes; but what if, when the Almighty suffered them to be drowned, He only transferred them from one sphere of existence to another; and that His mercy followed them thither!

Had they been permitted to reach manhood, it is more than possible that the sinful allurements of earth might have so hardened their moral character as to make them incapable of attaining eternal life; and knowing this, God mercifully removed them to the Unseen-Life, where their chances of salvation would be greater.

The influence of bad companions, and the disadvantage of an evil environment, might have rendered them insensible to the pleadings of an earthly preacher. And so God placed them in a World where the atmosphere of eternal realities would make them more likely to listen to the message of salvation when preached to them there.

And thus, however terrible, from a human standpoint, the judgment which involves the innocent with the guilty; however heartrending the disaster which

closes the earthly career of those who, had they been permitted to live, might have become far better Christians than we are, our faith in God's goodness and justice remains unshaken.

Our belief affords us what the creed of those who differ from us does not afford them. Chained to the horrible thought that the destiny of *every one* is fixed at the moment of death, they are compelled to make God's Providences the point at which His love vanishes. The waves have quenched it; the lightning has blasted it; the earthquake has swallowed it.

But not so do we think. We believe that "the Lord is good to *all*, and His tender mercies are over *all* His works" (Ps. cxlv. 9); that His yearning desire for man's salvation oversteps the petty, span-long limitation affixed by a loveless theology. The lost sheep may be overtaken by the snowstorm of death before the pitiful Saviour reaches it. But He will not, depend upon it, let the storm turn Him from His purpose. "He will go after that which is lost, until He find it" (Luke xv. 4). The love of God will surely follow the poor drowned sailor, the suffocated miner, and millions who by disaster

have been prematurely swept from out the Earth-Life into the Intermediate-life.

Does not Christ, Who preached the Gospel to sinful Antediluvians that they might "live according to God in the spirit," either Himself, or in the persons of His servants, preach to *them* there? We believe that He does do so, and thus, in face of everything which befalls mankind, we can hold firm to our belief in the love, mercy and justice of God.

III. *Our Deduction invests the duty of Intercessory Prayer with increased significance.*

There is no need to insist upon the necessity for Prayer. It is a duty which has been recognised under every form of religious belief. The Christian instinctively feels that without it his hold on eternal realities is likely to be relaxed, and his moral and spiritual development unlikely to be accomplished. He no more expects that the Christ-life within him will be kept alive without communion with God, than that fish-life can remain without the water, or animal and plant-life without the air. Prayer is the atmosphere in which he "lives, and moves, and has his being." He knows that the more he imbibes it into his spiritual constitution, the more vigorous

will he become; the less he does so, the feebler, in his faith and practice, will he be; while, if he does not pray at all, he will probably lose his power of perceiving Divine truth.

But while the necessity for prayer is universally acknowledged, the superiority of Intercessory Prayer is too often insufficiently realised. And yet the latter is as much above all other kind of prayer, as the act of giving is above that of receiving.

And for this reason.

It is quite possible to make prayer degenerate into a mere exercise of selfishness. Many earnest-minded persons pray a great deal; but only for themselves. It is conceivable that a little less of this kind of prayer might even be better for the development of their character.

In the act of Intercessory Prayer, we rise into an atmosphere where selfishness is placed out of its element.

When we pray for others, we put ourselves *en rapport* with God. He is always thinking about others; constantly concerning Himself about their welfare. In Intercession we do the same thing. Consequently, there is an affinity between God's

mind and ours. A thousand prayers offered to God, where the consideration of self lies behind them, will never bring us into such near communion with Him as one earnest petition presented on behalf of another.

In this way, Intercessory Prayer is a nobler exercise of the soul than any other prayer can possibly be.

There was a grander majesty, even, about the Lord Jesus Christ, when He pleaded, "Father, forgive them," than when He prayed, "Let this cup pass from Me."

Now, it seems to me that those who deny the truth of this Deduction, destroy a great deal of the significance of Intercessory Prayer. They adopt a theological position which assigns no room for an answer to most of their prayers for others. They mark out a little period, viz., the Earth-Life of a man, —beyond which they account an answer impossible; and, as they perfectly well know it to be more the exception than the rule for the answer to be vouchsafed *within* that period, they have no alternative but to view the most of their intercessions as ineffectual. At best, there is only a chance of God granting what

is asked. In nine cases out of ten, from their standpoint, the utmost that Intercession is likely to bring about, is to raise the petitioner's own moral and spiritual tone.

In other words, more often than not, it fails in its *direct* purpose.

Take an instance in point. In our Litany we pray that God may "have mercy upon *all* men ; and in one of the Occasional Prayers, that He will "be pleased to make His ways known unto *all* sorts and conditions of men." Suppose we pare down the beautiful words, and limit the "all" to mean only those living upon the earth at the time we present the petition. What then? Within an hour, before ever we leave the church, thousands of souls will have left the Earth-life, with no knowledge, or but an inadequate knowledge, of God vouchsafed to them. There can be no question about that fact. If the mercy and enlightenment for which we pleaded on their behalf will not, under any circumstances, be granted *after death*, why make our intercession so embracive?

Were we consistent in asking for that which we knew beforehand would not be granted? Were not

the Puritans more logical than Churchmen who deny our Deduction, when the former objected to the clause in the Litany just quoted, on the grounds that, as millions departed this life in an unsaved condition, it was certain God did not mean them to obtain salvation, and that, therefore, it was absurd to ask it for them ?

Take one other instance of how Intercessory Prayer may be robbed of its significance, when there is the denial of the preaching of the Gospel in the Intermediate-life.

A Christian mother, thoroughly earnest, but imperfectly instructed concerning the all of Divine truth, has a son.

He, we will suppose, has reached the age of manhood; is affectionate; moral in his life; but not a Christian.

From infancy, she and others have taught him that Christianity is bound up with the doctrine that the destiny of all is irrevocably fixed at death, and that the Almighty will consign the lost to an eternity of unutterable agony. As a boy, he believed it, because his mother said it was so; as a man, he finds himself unable to surrender his conscience to a

creed which outrages instincts which he knows to be good. And so, without being actively hostile, he remains indifferent to a religion of which he ignorantly imagines these perversions to be an indispensable part.

The poor mother, believing that he, should he die with his doubts unremoved, must be inevitably lost, is profoundly distressed, and, for twenty or thirty years, makes him the subject of her intercessory prayers.

At last, perhaps without a moment's warning, giving no indication that he has become a Christian in her sense of the word, he is struck down by Death. She is heartbroken. It is too late now! The last hope is gone! Her son is eternally lost!

Yes; but what of her intercessions for him! Are thirty years of pleading to effect no good?

Was she, then, altogether mistaken in believing that her Saviour would be faithful to His promise—"All things, whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive" (Matt. xxi. 22)?

And yet it must be so, if no enlightenment and salvation can come to that son in the Unseen-life.

In this way has a crude theology stripped

Intercessory Prayer of much of its significance, by leaving us but a *bare* probability that God will answer it.

How very different is it with us who believe that Jesus is as much a Saviour to men in the Unseen-Life, as to those in the Earth-Life. To us, there is no inconsistency in praying that God may "have mercy upon *all* men," although we are absolutely sure that the bulk of those for whom we pray will depart this life without the knowledge of Him. If, on the next morning after presenting such a petition, we were to read in our newspaper that, at the moment of praying, a whole continent of beings had suddenly died unsaved, our faith in the efficacy of that petition would not be shaken in the slightest degree. We should admit, of course, with respect to these beings, that God had not answered our prayer *within a certain time:* but we should emphatically decline to say that, because of that, He would not, and could not answer it at all. With the fact before us, in Holy Writ, that Jesus preached to a world unsaved, *after death*, we should view that continent of souls in the Intermediate-Life as still within the reach of

His mercy. Why should we think Him less pitiful, to-day, than He was eighteen hundred years ago? Instead of feeling that the words of our Church's Litany are hyperbolical, and incapable of fulfilment, we should re-iterate them with intenser earnestness.

Then again, were we placed in a like position to that of the mother whom we have instanced, we should not imagine that because our son died without the faith we possess, it was absolutely certain he would be eternally lost. Nor should we think our intercessions had been unavailing.

How do we know that if that man had had more enlightened instructors, and had been offered a theology more worthy of the name of "Gospel," he might not have been a Christian! The chances are he might. How can we suppose that the Jesus Who "came not to destroy men's lives, but to save them" (Luke ix. 56), will make no effort, hereafter, to sweep away his misconception of truth!

Moreover, the man was not dead to all sense of goodness.

He did homage in his heart to the character of Jesus, as it was imperfectly reflected by his mother.

Many a deed of kindness and self-sacrifice done by him may be remembered and appreciated. Will Christ "break the bruised reed, and quench the smoking flax," *before* "He send forth judgment unto victory"? (Matt. xii. 20.) He says He will not; that never shall His judgment against that man be finally pronounced; never shall He surrender His chance of snatching a victim from the grasp of Destruction, until the reed has been irretrievably broken, and the flax hopelessly quenched *by man himself*. So long as the one is but bruised, and the other still smoking, whether in this, or the next Life, Christ will go on with His work of mercy.

And thus, so far from the man's removal from the Earth-Life making us think that our supplications for him have been of no avail, we plead all the more earnestly; confident that one day, in His own good time, God will answer our prayers, because He "will have all men to be saved" (1 Tim. ii. 4), and we shall have been asking "according to His will" (1 John v. 14).

Truly this enlargement of our thoughts concerning Intercessory Prayer invests it with magnificent significance.

Viewed as we view it, what, we ask, can so comfort us as we stand beside the dead!

What a chilling vacuum there is in our religion, if, when once the breath has left the body of a dear one, supplications must cease!

How contrary to the dictates of charity, if, according to some, we may only pray for "the *faithful* departed"!

How grand and Christ-like, if, by our intercessions on earth, we are helping poor lost souls in the Intermediate-Life to find their way to the bosom of the Good Shepherd!

IV. *Our Deduction imparts new incentive to work for Christ.*

This new incentive arises from the conviction that earnest efforts made for the salvation of others will yield results *outside the limit usually assigned.*

That limit, many say, is the moment of death; at which if results have not accrued, they will never do so.

We contend that, according to God's Word, the limit within which results are possible must not be affixed at any point short of the Judgment Day. That is clear from what St. Peter has said.

The difference is enormous. In the one case, more than half the work done for Christ is practically rendered hopeless. In the other case, none of it is so. On the one hand, there is only a chance that a single seed, out of every hundred or thousand good seeds sown, will germinate. On the other, that *every* seed may.

Of course the different aspects of things presented by the two views will considerably affect the worker in the way in which he prosecutes his work. The one, at times, will cause him to be disheartened and despondent, and he will need the intoxicating stimulus of religious excitement to keep him at his post.

The other will make him calmly persistent, and uniformly hopeful. Noisy urgings to duty will rather hinder than help him. He will be undismayed if results do not appear, because he sees a way in which God will be able (even when others say it is impossible,) to fulfil His promise—"My word . . . . shall not return unto Me void" (Isa. lv. 11).

The force of these remarks will come home, especially, to those of my brethren who, like myself,

have worked as clergymen in East London, or in similar spheres of duty.

Think of an earnest clergyman whose creed forbids him to hope that any *after death* can be turned to Christ. Full of noble enthusiasm, and eager for the eternal salvation of his parishioners, he commences his work. He preaches, teaches, warns, exhorts, visits from house to house, willing "to spend and be spent," if only he can make men Christians. So he goes on, and at the end of twelve months the good he has done is scarcely appreciable. Ignorance, grinding poverty, and an evil environment, have, as far as he can see, neutralized his efforts. Another year of the same experience. In spite of a sincere wish to the contrary, the conviction begins to force itself upon his mind that much of his work is of no avail. It produces its effect upon him. There is to him less of promise about Christian work than there was. He goes on with his task because he is a good man, and it is a duty; but the impetus arising from great expectations is waning.

Twenty years pass away. Thousands to whom he has ministered have died during that period. In the case of how many of them can he say that he has

seen the outcome of his labours? Of but, comparatively, a few. What is his candid estimate of his ministry in the face of his belief that, as concerns the many who have died, no results *will ever come?*

It can be none other than that by far the larger proportion of his work for Christ has yielded nothing.

Can we wonder if Christian energy in such an one should all but die out? His creed in a great measure is responsible for it.

Contrast with this, the advantage possessed by one who can believe that the work of Redemption is not, necessarily, in all cases, restricted by the grave.

How immeasurably expanded does the horizon of expectation become. Such an one in his work for Christ does not look for anything like a harvest of results until the After-Life. Now and again, indeed, he may be rejoiced at the sight of some seed sown by him springing into blade, or even into the unripened ear, before the rest has shown itself above ground. But that is but an earnest of what he expects will follow. He knows, as concerning the bulk of "the bread which he is casting upon the waters," that it will be carried on the tide of Time

into the ocean of Eternity, and he will not find it until "*after many days*" (Eccles. xi. 1).

When, for example, he sees his instruction given to the children, and his ministration to the adults, yielding no manifest results, for the reason that an evil home-influence, and the foul atmosphere of poverty and squalor, have dulled and blurred all just perception of goodness and truth, he does not account his efforts as so much energy thrown away. Why should he?

He believes in a God who is not an unsympathising Exactor, but a Being of infinite love and fairness, who will leave no stone unturned to save a soul from death.

The magnificent picture of Jesus preaching to lost sinners in Hades is ever before his mind's eye. The word faithfully spoken for the Master "shall not return void." It may have been imperfectly realised, misunderstood, unheeded, forgotten, this side of the grave, but it shall be remembered beyond, and may, in spite of all that some daringly say to the contrary, bring poor, erring, blinded ones to the feet of their Saviour.

With the Gospel invested with this diviner grandeur,

the whole complexion of his work for Christ becomes transfigured. Others will be made desponding and half-hearted by a lack of results; he, the more incited to increased activity. Others, like foolish children who are ignorant of the laws of growth and development, will sow seeds, and grow disappointed with their gardening, because the green blades do not immediately show themselves; he will go on with the sowing, content to wait. Full well does he know that many a seed which has not germinated in the Earth-Life, on account of the freezing air of an unfavourable environment, may bring forth fruit an hundred-fold in the sunnier circumstances of the Unseen-Life.

Many of the clergy and laity whom I know, conspicuous for their untiring energy and self-denial in their labours for Christ among the wretched and outcast, hold the truth embodied in this fifth Deduction. And some of them have acknowledged to me that but for the thought of a preaching of the Gospel hereafter, under circumstances where there is a possibility of salvation, such as can hardly be said for many to exist here, the incentive for work would be lost.

V. *Our Deduction makes it probable that the mission of the Church of Christ is a far greater one than is generally supposed.*

The Church is an institution founded by our Lord Jesus Christ to be the living witness of the truth which He came to reveal, and the medium by which that truth shall be made known to mankind.

She is no mere eclectic association formed for the benefit of those who constitute her. She is not a privileged community of Divine favorites, with no relation to the great outside world, except in so far as that world supplies the material by which she can be kept in existence. Many have viewed her in this light, but they have been mistaken. She exists for a purpose. That purpose is, that having first received Christ's blessings of salvation, she shall be the channel through which they shall be offered to all outside her pale.

That is perfectly plain from the last earthly words spoken by her Founder. "Go ye into all the world and preach the Gospel to *every creature*" (Mark xvi. 15). Her commission is to give effect to what God in His love has done for the world, by bringing the knowledge of salvation to every member of the human family.

As far as we know from the statements of the Bible, no knowledge of salvation will ever come to man apart from the instrumentality of man. He, not angels, has been told off to carry the water of life to perishing mortals. Consequently, every privilege which the Church enjoys has been granted in order that she may the better discharge the office for which she was created.

Now, if we adopt the idea that the work of salvation is restricted, in every case, to this side of the grave; if, in other words, the hope of redemption dies with the unsaved, we are driven, perforce, to admit that the Church's mission does not extend beyond this world. Although she herself, in the persons of those who constitute her, is partly in the Earth-Life, and partly in the Intermediate-Life, yet she can do absolutely nothing for the vast majority who have crossed the border-line which divides the Seen from the Unseen.

The following illustration will serve to show the unreasonableness of the idea. Suppose that a king of unbounded sympathy and unlimited resources, formed in one part of his dominions a great society for the alleviation of distress which existed among his

subjects. Imagine him, without either breaking up the Society, or indicating that the work is not to be continued, removing the greater number of its members into another district of his empire, where distress is even more wide-spread than in the locality where they had hitherto been stationed. What should we say if it were told us that the great Society does nothing in the way of relief, except in the smaller of the two areas of suffering? Should we not declare that the king was not carrying out the purpose for which the Society was formed? Why weaken the good work, by taking away so many of the members from a place where they are so badly wanted, and placing them in a spot where, although there is plenty of scope, they must not labour for the cause!

And yet that is the light in which the mission of the Church of Christ is regarded by very many. Millions who constitute her have gone into the Unseen World. They still belong to her; her commission of mercy has never been revoked; and yet with myriads of unsaved souls pouring into that World, it is supposed that they have nothing to do. Because God has given them rest from painful

earthly labours, they, forsooth, are thought to be whiling away centuries in a state of unconcern for any but themselves.

Let us see what this restricted view of the Church's function involves. How can it be reconciled with our Lord's words, "Preach the Gospel to *every creature*"? If the preaching only embraces a work to be done by the Church *while located on earth*, then surely we are driven to admit that our Saviour, in giving the command, either was unable to foresee what the actual condition of mankind in regard to the prospects of salvation would be, or if He knew this, He gave an impracticable commission to His Church. If we deny that she has a ministry in the Intermediate-Life, we are shut up to one of these two conclusions.

Suppose the expression "every creature" be made to exclude all who had previously passed out of the Earth-Life, and to include only those who at the time the words were spoken were living, or would live, in this world. Did Christ not know that millions would die without so much as even hearing His name? Was He not aware that, for more than fourteen hundred years, His Church would be

ignorant of the very existence of the human life teeming upon the vast continent of America? As omniscient God, did He not foresee that, in the nineteenth century, the Church in making a map of her missionary work, would have to mark black the greater part of it as the territory of paganism?

And yet He said "Preach to *every creature*." Are we prepared to say that the words were the outcome of a too enthusiastic optimism; that Christ, unable to read the future, thought man's prospects of salvation would be better than they have actually been?

We shudder at such a suggestion; and yet the passage read in the light of subsequent history warrants it, if there be no preaching in the Intermediate-Life. The Gospel has not been preached in this world to *one* out of every thousand creatures.

Again, our Lord's command was an altogether *impracticable* one, unless He intended His Church to continue the preaching of the Gospel in the Unseen-Life. How, otherwise, was it possible to obey it? For centuries the number of those who composed the Church were but a handful as contrasted with the

world's population. If every Christian had been a St. Paul, millions would have been inaccessible to the preachers, on account of the difficulties of locomotion, and the fact that one-half of the globe was then unknown. Even supposing that, after fifty years from Christ's ascension, the Church had been competent to fulfil the mission entrusted to her, during that fifty years, untold millions would have died without hearing the Gospel.

And yet the command was "Preach to *every creature.*" Was our Lord assigning an impossible task? Instead of "*every* creature," did He only mean a very small number? We cannot believe this without re-modelling our ideas of Him.

But the admission of the truth of our fifth Deduction extricates us from the theological difficulties indicated above. The future earthly condition of the human race was not hidden from Christ, nor did He give an impracticable commission. What He commanded He meant. His Church would preach to "*every* creature."

Divine Providence might so order the lot of man that the majority would never hear His message of mercy in this life; but that was to be no bar to their

doing so in another. Bodily dissolution would be but a change of locality and surroundings, both to preachers and hearers. The reach of the preaching was conterminable with the stretch of the love which embraced "*the world*." His Church would preach the Gospel in the Intermediate-Life, and its mission, incapable of fulfilment here, would be accomplished there.

It is in this way that we are alone able to rightly estimate the grandeur of the Church's mission.

Instead of being an Institution wholly inadequate for the work she was meant to do, she is invested with a Divine potentiality for blessing the whole race of man. Beneath the light of our Deduction we can understand St. Paul's utterances concerning her; that to her God has "made known the mystery of His will, according to His good pleasure which He hath purposed in Himself; that in the dispensation of the fulness of times He might gather together in one *all things* in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth . . . that we should be to the praise of His glory who first trusted in Christ; . . . . to the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be

known *by the Church* the manifold wisdom of God according to the eternal purpose which He purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Eph. i. 9, 10, 12; and iii. 10 and 11).

What a different complexion is put upon religion itself by this truth. Without it, our Creed is far short of what we could wish. There is a disquieting sense that much is unsatisfactory.

It is so appallingly dreadful to imagine that the greater portion of our fellow-creatures have gone unsaved into the Unseen-Life, and will be lost, because no one has told them of their Saviour, or because preachers and teachers have misrepresented His Gospel.

We tremble to think about it, and yet, at the same time we are so constituted that it is difficult to acquire that tone of unthinking religionism which alone can save us from drifting into either infidelity, melancholy, or insanity.

But everything is changed by the thought that Christ's Church is preaching her Master's Gospel in the Intermediate-Life. The sense of unsatisfactoriness vanishes as a vision of vast possibilities looms into view. Be the earthly environment of men

as black and unpromising as it may, behind it is the sunshine of God's love and fairness, and the fact that at the Great Judgment there will be no creature to whom salvation has not been preached.

And so as I look at the Church of Christ on earth, I am disappointed. Some of us are half-hearted in our work; others, not working at all. Some, longing to serve the Master, cannot do so as they would, because the cross of ill-health, or trouble has been laid upon them. Others, alas! by their imperfect presentment of truth, do not attract to the Saviour.

And then I think of the Church of Christ in the Intermediate-Life, and am satisfied; for a magnificent contrast presents itself. All of that Church there are preaching, teaching, straining every energy to woo to Christ the ones who had been unfavoured on earth. The half-heartedness, the hindrances and the ignorance, have disappeared in the reality, the opportunities and the clearer light of a Higher Sphere.

## Three Objections against this Deduction considered.

I am reluctant to close the discussion of the subject without considering one or two points which may, possibly, be urged in opposition to the truth contained in our last Deduction.

*Objection* 1. If men be told that the destiny of the finally impenitent will not be an eternity of conscious suffering, and, moreover, that it is possible for some *after death* to be saved, will not a wholesome element of fear be removed from religious teaching?

Our answer to this is "No." Fear has little or no power to make men Christians. Experience teaches that the condition of mind produced by terror is disastrous. Either an evanescent excitement is kindled, which, evaporating, hardens a man and leaves him in a worse condition than before, or self-complacency, or religious insanity ensues. It has been my lot to see fear in all these three phases of development.

Men will attain eternal life, not by being frightened into it; but by being attracted by it. Our Lord

said He would "*draw* all men," not drive them, unto Himself. The only wholesome fear about religion is the fear of God's judgment on sin, and the fear of losing eternal existence and happiness. If this will not sober a man into becoming a Christian, no unbelievable theological exaggeration will do so.

Furthermore, it is positively immoral, if we ourselves know the truth, to allow men to infer, as numbers of preachers do, that the future of impenitence is worse than it really is. God, in His Word, says that it will entail a just punishment, and the loss of immortality. Some, knowing better, allow their hearers to think that it will result in an eternity of inconceivable torment. A clergyman who had listened to a sermon which I preached on this subject, met me a few days afterwards, and told me he agreed with every word I had spoken, and would not have preached the sermon on any consideration.

What is such a miserable reliance on the power of fear, but an attempt to get men into the Kingdom of God under false pretence!

Moreover, the doctrine of Eternal Torment, and the denial of a preaching hereafter, has been tried

as a supposed power to coerce men into becoming good, and has signally failed in producing that result. At the time of the Commonwealth, Puritan and Calvinistic influences were in the ascendant, and these doctrines were vehemently promulgated in all their uncloaked hideousness. What was the effect upon men's minds? The opposite of what was expected. The succeeding age was characterised by such lewdness, debauchery and religious indifference, as has never been equalled in England.

In pleasing contrast, a truer conception of God and a more merciful presentment of His Gospel, has, during the past thirty or forty years, wrought wonders for the kingdom of Christ on earth.

That Christian men are beginning to realise that love is more potent than terror, is seen from the fact that the preaching of the seventeenth and eighteenth century type is accounted intolerable to-day.

*Objection* 2. If it be believed that salvation is possible for many *after Death*, will not the thought of the chances of the Hereafter lead some, in *this* Life, to be indifferent as to their belief and character?

Again, we answer, "No." If a person think at all about the chances of salvation, he is well aware,

from his experience of other things, that the chances themselves *must* hinge upon the line of conduct which he may pursue. If he do not create the chance, at all events, he can destroy it.

From whatever outside cause the chance may arise, he is conscious that he has the power of so acting as to place himself beyond the reach of that chance. For example, a sick man has a prospect of recovery to health; but if he wilfully disregard the doctor's directions, and persistently elect not to abandon that which has produced his malady, he will not grow well. There may be a probability of rescue for a sailor on a sinking ship; but if he tie his hands and feet, and neglect to take the life-belt, though a passing vessel be in sight, he will be drowned. In both cases, the man's own conduct will determine his chances.

And it is so in regard to spiritual matters.

We have nowhere in these pages taught that one who has persistently closed his eyes to truth, and in opposition to conscience, resolutely practised evil, will be capable of salvation after Death.

On the contrary, we do not think he will be. The Bible seems very positive on this point. We think

it possible for a man to cut himself off from the chance of eternal life, in like manner as the sick man may place himself outside the possibility of health, or the sailor, of rescue.

The truth is, our constitution, as moral beings, is such as to render it an impossibility that we can misuse, or disregard a blessing without suffering a corresponding loss. The faculty never used will in time disappear altogether. The man who turns his back upon the love of God, as we have represented it, cannot do so without creating within himself a certain moral numbness and insensibility.

Let him go on for years in this way, and the insensibility will increase. Let him live out his Earth-Life in that state, and he will find, at last, that he has lost the power of appreciating Love. It will follow him into the Intermediate-Life, because, as part of God Himself, it is undying; but he may be as dead to it as a deaf man is to beautiful music. Others may be charmed and melted by it; he, unmoved and unthawed. He will have destroyed his chance.

In the same way, the man who persists in evil, when the voice of conscience is speaking plainly

within him, cannot do so without hardening around him a character which must dull his perception of the beauty of goodness. Should he continue in that course, the perception will become fainter, until, at last, it will die out. He will become what St. Paul describes as "ἀδόκιμος" ("reprobate," 2 Tim. iii. 8), *i.e.*, one who has lost the power of discerning between good and evil. Goodness will have lost all attraction for him.

Years of wrong-doing, and the stifling of conscience, will have piled upon his moral nature such glaciers of hardness, as are impenetrable to the brightest rays of Divine Goodness; and beneath the hardness, that nature will stiffen into the awful arctic rigidity and silence of "the Second Death." He will have destroyed his chance.

And so we have no fear that any prospect of salvation beyond the grave, will lead a man to be indifferent as to his attitude towards religion, and concerning his character. The fact that anyone is indifferent, and leading a bad life, is a clear proof that he is not speculating upon the chance of salvation at all. If he were, he would be, and do, otherwise.

In the case of the sailor, just instanced, what greater proof could you have that he was not counting upon rescue, than the fact of tying his own hands and feet? If he was not mad, he was simply indifferent to the risks he was incurring. And that is the position of numbers who are leading godless lives.

As far as my judgment and observation have led me, I am convinced that one of the most potent causes of religious indifference has been the effect produced upon the minds of men by the preaching of the crude doctrines against which I have written. It has seemed so preposterous that *finite* offences should be followed by *infinite* punishments; that a brief life-time of neglect should entail an eternity of hopeless and fruitless agony; and that men should lose eternal life, because God never gave the chance of obtaining it—that thousands, on this account, have labelled religion as falsehood and absurdity.

And thus, by flinging discredit upon the whole of

Divine truth, the very means employed to sober and restrain men, have but confirmed them in their indifference and yielded a pretext for wilder licence.

There is no surer way of hardening child or man in wrong-doing, than by threatening penalties which are felt to be outrages upon justice. The power of effecting good will be destroyed, because behind the threatenings will be the counteracting conviction that they are too appallingly horrible to be true.

*Objection* 3. If it be believed that the Church continues her preaching of the Gospel in the Intermediate-Life, will it not make her members, in the Earth-Life, careless and less energetic in the carrying out of her Lord's command?

Our answer to this is, "Assuredly not; it will have a contrary effect." Nothing is more certain to make men half-hearted and neglectful in any task assigned to them, than to think that it can never be accomplished. What boy at school would be assiduous in his studies, had he the fixed conviction that he could never become wise! What soldier

would be enthusiastic to fight, or captain to lead, knowing beforehand that victory was impossible!

The surest way of making men zealous and indefatigable in a work is to convince them that it can be done. The spur is then given to activity. America was discovered, because Columbus was, first, sure that there must be land in the far west; and, next, that it would be possible for him to find it. The Alps have been bored, the earth encircled with cable, and thousands of other marvellous results of energy achieved, solely for the reason that the energy was enkindled by the conviction that the results were possible.

In regard to the Church of Christ, limit her preaching of the Gospel to this world, and what have you done? You have made the command given to her an impracticable one. It is impossible, in this Life, to preach to "*every creature.*"

However zealous she may be, there will be the paralysing influence on her work arising from the knowledge that millions are losing eternal life,

because God has placed upon her a responsibility greater than she can possibly sustain. Is not such a reflection sufficient to damp her ardour, and lower her estimate of her mission to mankind? Has it not, in fact, done so? Is not the present age, which is less disfigured than preceding ages by narrowness of doctrine, more conspicuous for missionary enterprise?

Thus, we have no hesitation in saying, that to believe that the Church of Christ will continue to preach her Master's Gospel in the Intermediate-Life, so far from making us careless and less energetic in Evangelistic work, will afford a magnificent incentive to further effort. The thought that the fulfilment of the Church's mission has been guaranteed by the fiat of Omnipotence, will extinguish the disheartenment which is engendered from the doubt of success.

We shall be doubly anxious to bear an honourable part in a glorious consummation.

Conscious that upon Her has been laid the

distinguished honour of being linked with God in a purpose of Love towards a lost race, and humbled by the thought of how little she has yet done towards the fulfilment of that purpose, the Church will seek, by greater zeal, to justify her existence.

For she will know that when the Intermediate-Life shall be ending, and the Great-Judgment shall be set, of Her it will be said, "She has preached the Gospel to *every creature*."

THE END.

# "OUR LIFE AFTER DEATH,"

*Crown 8vo. Cloth Lettered*, 2/6 *nett; post free*, 2/9.

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**Copies of this work have been graciously accepted by H.R.H. the Princess of Wales, H.R.H. the Duchess of Teck, Lord Salisbury, K.G., and the Right Hon. W. E. Gladstone.**

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